The Guardian Weekly

Vol 156, No 18
Week ending May 4, 1997

The Washington Post Le Monde

US presses Mobutu to go quietly

Chris McGreal in Johannesburg and agencies

PRESIDENT Bill Clinton's special envoy to Zaire, Bill Richardson, was due to meet President Mobutu Sese Seko on Tuesday to try to persuade him to accept the conditions for an orderly transition of power set by Laurent Kabila's rebels.

This would almost certainly involve a humiliating departure to his palace in northern Zaire, or his leaving the country altogether.

Mr Richardson, who is Washington's ambassador to the United Nations, planned to fly on to rebel-held territory to meet Mr Kabila later.

He said: "The United States believes that there can be no military solution to the crisis, but rather a negotiated settlement leading to an inclusive transitional government and fair and free elections."

Meanwhile the UN World Food Programme said on Monday it had found 6,000 or 7,000 of the 80,000 Rwandan refugees driven from their camps near Kisangani last week, and others were emerging from the forest. A team had come across the refugees about 40km from their camps.

The UN said that without help from the rebels to locate, gather and care for the refugees, Mr Kabila's insistence that they must all be repatriated within 60 days of May 1 was "totally unrealistic". Once they were gathered and cared for, the project would be "do-able", a spokesman said.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, who flew to New York to brief the Security Council, expressed "deep concern" about reports from a number of sources that abuses had been committed against the refugees.

Elsewhere in rebel-held territory, the UN Children's Fund said about 20 men in military uniform seized about 50 refugee children and some adults last Saturday from a hospital north of Bukavu, close to the Rwandan border, run by the British charity Save the Children.

"Judging from what we've heard, I think it's unlikely that we're going to find these children alive," a Unicef spokesman said. He said the hospital's director described the children being thrown or herded into trucks.

Mr Kabila bowed to pressure to allow international agencies to search for the missing refugees after the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, accused the rebels of "slow extermination" by starvation. Mr Kabila has denied that there is an organised campaign against Rwandan civilians.

The rebels accused Hutu extremists of forcing the refugees out to provide cover for attacks and to prevent their repatriation. But there is growing evidence that the rebels played a significant role in chasing the refugees from the camps.

Rebels prevented aid workers and journalists entering the camps last week. By the time they were allowed in, four days later, the refugees were gone. And that visit was curtailed by gunfire, which the rebels blamed on militiamen but aid workers suspected was an attempt to manufacture an air of danger as an excuse to hustle the visitors away before they could inspect grave sites closely.

Zairean villagers accused the rebels of murdering hundreds of refugees and burying them with a bulldozer. They alleged that the massacre came after battles between the rebels and Hutu extremists.

Peter Kessler, a UN human rights spokesman based in Nairobi, said that the team found a fresh mound of soil in the camp, but did not have time to examine it.

The torment of the refugees hiding in the dense forests has drained off the considerable goodwill the rebels have built up abroad by their rapid, relatively bloodless, sweep across Zaire. Mr Richardson's primary task is to ensure that Kinshasa does not become the exception to this rule by persuading Mr Mobutu to step aside.

On Monday government forces deserted the town of Kikwit, 400km east of Kinshasa, following reports that the rebels had taken Idiofa, 80km further east.

Kikwit, the centre of the 1995 Ebola virus outbreak, is the commercial capital of Bandudnu province, which supplies most of Kinshasa's domestically produced food. Residents said the local authorities had asked the troops to lay down their arms.

Alex Duval Smith in Washington adds: Three planes hired by the television evangelist Pat Robertson to fly emergency aid to Zaire in 1994 were used exclusively to get diamonds out of the country, their pilots told the Washington Post on Monday.

A spokesman for Mr Robertson at first denied the claim but later said the aircraft had turned out to be unsuitable for medical relief.



A young Hutu refugee is weighed at an aid centre in Goma: many thousands more are missing in Zaire's forests PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MOORE

Washington Post, page 16

Liberals seek boost from Canadian poll

Howard Schneider in Toronto

CANADA'S prime minister, Jean Chrétien, took advantage this week of strong economic figures and a weak, divided opposition to call a federal election for June 2.

Only 3½ years into his five-year mandate, Mr Chrétien decided to test his Liberal Party's record of reducing the federal deficit and increasing trade against persistent concern in the country about jobs and an unemployment rate of more than 9 per cent.

Speaking to reporters in Ottawa last Sunday, he said he was calling the election now because his party is "ahead of schedule" in its drive for a balanced budget and he feels it is time to let Canadians pass judgment on that record.

The whirlwind 36-day campaign will be a test not only of the Liberals' economic record, but also of Mr Chrétien's ability to fend off largely regional challenges from four other parties, not least from the separatist Bloc Québecois in Quebec.

The Bloc holds 50 seats in parliament, enough to form the official opposition. The results in Quebec will set the stage for events leading up to another referendum, probably in 1999, on secession from Canada.

According to recent polls, none of the opposition parties stand much chance of ousting the Liberals, who hold 174 of the 295 seats in parliament. The most recent Angus Reid survey gave the Liberals 42 per cent support, while the Conservatives and Reform were roughly tied for second, both with less than 20 per cent. The New Democrats had about 11 per cent, while the single-province Bloc Québecois held about 50 per cent support within Quebec.
— *Washington Post*

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 450	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Labour plans to appoint minister for Europe

John Palmer in Brussels and Ian Black

BRITAIN'S Labour party plans to follow an election victory this week by appointing a minister for European Union affairs to take direct charge of negotiations for a new EU treaty.

The new minister — expected to be Joyce Quin, a former Labour member of the European Parliament — would replace the British ambassador to the EU, Sir Stephen Wall, as Britain's chief representative to the inter-governmental conference (IGC) that is reviewing the Maastricht treaty.

If Labour wins, she will fly to Brussels on Monday with a public statement of co-operation and goodwill for Britain's EU partners.

Labour sources said this week the move was designed to underline the authority a new government hoped to command over Europe and to signal a more constructive contribution to the IGC.

But the new minister, whose appointment must be confirmed by Labour leader Tony Blair, would be subordinate to Robin Cook, who is expected to be Foreign Secretary.

If she is confirmed as European affairs minister, Ms Quin will tell the IGC that the Labour government wants to rejoin the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty as quickly as is practical. Other EU member states will also be told that they can expect a marked shift in Britain's stance, moving away from confrontation and towards closer co-operation.

Mr Blair himself may not have long to wait before he meets all his fellow EU heads of government. In spite of Labour's public lack of enthusiasm for an early EU summit, the current Dutch EU presidency is pressing ahead with arrangements for a special leaders' meeting in Maastricht on May 23.

If elected, a Labour government is expected to agree to some modest expansion of majority vote decisions, a further restriction on the use of the national veto, new legislative powers for the European Parliament, and a stronger commitment to employment, social standards and human rights in the treaty.

But EU governments know that a Labour government will take a virtually identical position to the Conservatives over moves to strengthen foreign, security and defence policy as well as the transfer to the EU of responsibility for external frontiers, immigration and asylum.

● Public opinion polls in Britain put Labour on a clear course for victory in the May 1 general election. Tuesday's Gallup poll put Labour at 51 per cent, Conservatives at 29, and Liberal Democrats at 13, a 22-point lead for Labour.

Election focus, pages 10-11

UK's continental drift is damaging Europe

THE European Commission's report on the prospects for European monetary union (EMU) is just one more illustration of how the UK government's dereliction of duty with regard to the European Union is making its portrayal of Europe as Germany's backyard into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

It seems that Italy is to be left out of EMU because German public opinion would see its participation as a threat to the stability of the currency; that is to replace the sacred Deutschmark. If this is the case, we Italians, with a government that gives better prospects than ever before of clearing out the mess left by decades of corrupt rule, have every right to feel aggrieved.

But what can we expect when the country capable of really checking the combined German and French dominance of the EU continues to pretend that Europe is none of its business?

If only British politicians would understand, and explain to their electorate, that success in any undertaking requires commitment, and that the current in-out approach is causing immense damage, not only to the UK itself but also to Europe as a whole.
Margaret Kearton,
Modena, Italy

WHEN on earth is the UK going to realise that Euro-mania is not the answer to its problems? Who wants partners such as Germany and France, whose populations are blatantly xenophobic and who manipulate their former colonies to their own selfish ends?

Please let's cast ourselves off from this sinking fortress and turn back to our world friends with which we have so much in common. OK, so we were never perfect ourselves, but let's encourage those traits we were known so well for — fair play, decency and acceptance of other races.

Let's rejoice with our Commonwealth partners and forge a new positive future with them.
Martin Carr,
Archbishop Luwum Theological College, Gulu, Uganda

WHEN the British general election was announced I trotted off to the embassy in order to register to vote. I was given a form to fill in, and to send back to my local electoral office.

As I read the form, a number of obstacles appeared. One of the sections of the form must be signed by a British national who can confirm that I am British. I don't know any British nationals here, but the exercise seems slightly absurd in any case — what proof is needed beyond my passport and birth certificate?

The second problem was that I had to find a proxy voter, in the UK.

But it was the stipulation that I had to fill in the form by October 10 last year, a date on which I was neither certain that I would be out of Britain nor that there would be an election on May 1, that dealt a fatal blow to my hopes of participating in the democratic process. Indeed, it seems that only Nostradamus would be in a position to register efficiently as an "overseas elector", although I suppose he would not have conformed with other specifications.
Alex Walker,
Mexico City, Mexico

Germany's sense of guilt

WHAT is the motive of those who write books, reports and articles about how ordinary Germans knew all about the atrocities committed by their government and armies, about the guilt of ordinary German soldiers as well as the SS (What did you do in the war, Vater? March 23)?

Let us put aside here the question of the guilt of soldiers in war. Some soldiers of most countries have done appalling things in most wars. But if we have to compare the degrees of the guilt that have to be shared by "ordinary" people whose fellow countrymen commit atrocities, let us take just three examples from the 20th century. Consider the behaviour of "ordinary":

☐ Americans in respect of the lynching of blacks in the southern states;
☐ British people in reaction to the mass slaughter by their bombers of civilians in German cities;
☐ Israelis in response to their officials' and troops' treatment of Palestinians over several decades.

In each of these cases it was, and is, very easy for Americans, British and Israelis to find out what was going on, and if they had made mass protest they could have almost certainly put a stop to it. The circumstances of the Germans in the second world war were very different.

In fact, Germans are probably the first and, so far, only people in history to express a sense of collective guilt. This is, in a way, encouraging. But it is also saddening, because it means that many Germans, like nearly everybody else, are still thinking in those national and group terms that make it so easy for people to do unspeakable things, and that make it so difficult to achieve liberty, equality and fraternity for all people.
Amorey Gethin,
Cambridge

JOACHIM WILLINK (April 20) fought on the Eastern Front as an officer to help Germany to subdue Russia's army, grab its territory, steal its assets and enslave and murder its people.

The Einsatzgruppen from which he seeks to distance himself could operate only where he and his comrades had temporarily destroyed major resistance to them. It was a mere division of labour.

Mr Willink's concern was that, like Napoleon's army, his Wehrmacht would fail. Nobody is truly safe from invasion until we all realise that every deliberate act in support of a dishonourable cause is a dishonourable act of dishonourable people.
Dion Giles,
Fremantle, Australia

Word of warning on IRA 'codes'

DANCE with the devil and you pay the price. The British government agencies that made a cosy deal with the IRA, giving them "codes" to authenticate their bomb warnings, really should now explain to the rest of us why this *modus vivendi* is the right way to combat terrorism (IRA brings chaos to London, April 27). What did they give (or promise) the terrorists in return? The chaos induced by recent hoax bomb threats should make the folly of these deals apparent even to the practitioners of accommodation.

The airlines learned long ago that most telephoned threats are hoaxes, and virtually all are ignored, as they should be; there is no known case of a terrorist warning being given before an aircraft bombing attempt.

Publicly reacting to telephoned terrorist threats simply gives those terrorists a superb weapon: a risk-free way to produce expensive chaos. Ignoring telephone threats would take one weapon away from the terrorists; reinstating the death penalty for murder would give the security forces a sorely needed weapon to use against them.

I have been an airline pilot for 30 years; I am accustomed to operating in the face of telephoned threats. The Libyan government's stated preference for having the two agents indicted for the Pan Am Flight 103 bombing tried in Scotland instead of the US, even though not sincere, makes a point. The UK has no death penalty; the US does. That alone should be proof of the deterrent value of the death penalty.

I admit I am not impartial; my wife was killed at Lockerbie on board Flight 103.
Bruce M Smith,
Bray, Berkshire

THE responsibility for the *débâcle* at Aintree (Grand National triumph thwarts IRA hoaxers, April 13) should be placed firmly and squarely at the door of 10 Downing Street. For as long as the British government retains executive responsibility for Northern Ireland it should be held accountable for the repercussions of the continued maladministration of that region.

The Northern Ireland Office should give priority to replacing the regional identity with one on a neutral, yet meaningful, theme, which would be acceptable to the majority within both communities. A new umbrella identity that can command the respect of all sections of that society is essential if the goal of "parity of esteem" for the two national identities is to be achieved.
Simon Hall-Raleigh,
Paston, Cambridgeshire

Sins of the past haunt Alberta

THE NEW élite of Alberta may find it comforting to look back in horror at the actions of the Alberta Eugenics Board and comment on the atrocities performed on Leilani Muir and so many others at the Provincial Training School (Playing God with people's lives, March 23).

It's not shocking news to me as I grew up in the shadow of that institution and its neighbour, the Ponoka Mental Hospital, during the 1950s. How well I remember my father, the clinical director at the PMH, raging at the inadequate funding for the mentally ill and the philosophically and culturally narrow attitudes of the Social Credit government.

Buchanan is spot-on when she states, "The Sterilisation Act . . . [stopped] undesirables from breeding". The teachers I remember to this day with fear also stopped "undesirables" from learning: they included anyone who was of an unacceptable background.

Alberta is still governed by a deeply conservative group of politicians and their élitist supporters, who will never take full responsibility for the sins of the past.
Margot Smythe,
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Briefly

YOU are correct in saying that President Mobutu's former foreign friends should sequester the property and money he holds abroad and hand it over to the people of Zaire (Exit of Zaire's corrupt despot, April 20). He has property in Belgium, France and Switzerland that would be surplus to the requirements of an emperor. France and Belgium have behaved disgracefully towards the people of Zaire, and Switzerland is notable for its collusion in grand theft with Mobutu.
Stephen Bulgin,
London

I STRONGLY applaud the growing pressure from the international community, as well as from within East Timor itself, to seek a solution to this terrible conflict (Pope speaks up on East Timor sovereignty, March 30).

It is due to the tireless campaigning from organisations around the world, as well as courageous journalism, that the questions of independence and self-determination for the people of East Timor have remained an issue on the international agenda.

The recognition of José Ramos Horta and Carlos Felipe Ximenes Belo as Nobel Prize laureates was long overdue, and the strength of the East Timorese people has been unjustly underplayed.
Robert Wilkinson,
Attapeu, Laos

REGARDING the article "Beijing fury at visit by Dalai Lama" (March 30), the Washington Post claims: "China . . . has occupied Tibet since invading it in 1950". This may not be true, according to America's finest China "experts".

In 1965, Professor John King Fairbank of Harvard University and Professor A Doak Barnett of Columbia University (now of John Hopkins) testified before William J Fulbright's Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and both stated that Tibet has always been an integral part of China. Furthermore, these eminent scholars claimed China has not exceeded its borders in its entire 5,000-year history.
Ng Cheung Chee and Michael Hogan,
Amsterdam, Holland

I READ with some dismay Tim Radford's promotion of the hype about the pathetic attempts to communicate with extraterrestrial life-forms (Space telescopes search for life, April 20). Don't these people realise that if there is intelligent life out there, then "it" is presumably intelligent enough to avoid communication with a group of people whose "leaders" are responsible for most of the other news items on pages 1-19 of the same issue.
Jim Hudson,
Richmond, BC, Canada

The **Guardian Weekly**

May 4, 1997 Vol 156 No 18

Annual subscription rates are £49 United Kingdom; £55 Europe inc. Eire, USA and Canada; £63 Rest of World.
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Military strike frees Lima hostages

Jane Diaz-Limaco in Lima

AS LIMA breathed a heart-felt sigh of relief that the longest hostage siege in Latin America's history was finally over, Peru's President Alberto Fujimori took sole responsibility for ordering the daring military strike on the Japanese ambassador's residence last week.

Peruvian newspapers hailed the success of the operation that ended the 126-day siege by Tupac Amaru rebels, while most foreign governments, including Tokyo, congratulated Mr Fujimori on the result that left just one of 72 hostages dead — initially overlooking reports that some of the 14 rebels were executed by security forces as they tried to surrender.

Apart from putting at risk the lives of all inside, including his own brother, Pedro, the president broke a pledge to Japan not to intervene unless a hostage was harmed. Nor did he warn Tokyo of the planned attack on the rebel-held Japanese diplomatic compound.

Mr Fujimori said: "I had to take such a difficult decision . . . alone, but conscious that in Peru there could not be a place for terrorism."

In the end the crisis turned on a battle of wills between Mr Fujimori and the rebels' leader, Néstor Cerpa.

In Lima, there were congratulations for the 140 commandos whose operation to free the hostages used an armoury of dynamite, grenades and paralysing gas and a network of tunnels running under the residence, apparently from nearby houses.

Only the family of the hostage who died from his wounds sounded a more melancholy note. "A lot of time had passed and a decision had to be made, but I don't know . . ." said Orlinda La Torre, sister-in-law of the dead man, judge Carlos Giusti.

Freed hostages revealed that they had received 10 minutes' prior warning of the attack. One, retired navy admiral Luis Giampetri Rojas, had a hidden radio transmitter and was reportedly responsible for letting the special troops know the exact moment the rebels began a daily game of football in a downstairs room.

The Bolivian ambassador, Jorge Gumucio, one of the hostages, said eight rebels, including Cerpa, were playing football when the first explosion, in a tunnel under their feet, ripped through the residence.

President Alberto Fujimori walks past the bodies of the Tupac Amaru leader, Néstor Cerpa (right), and another guerrilla on a staircase of the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima PHOTOGRAPH: RTV

Mr Fujimori later said that up to 10 of the rebels were killed by that bomb. Others, including Cerpa, were killed by commandos when they ran upstairs to confront the government force, he said.

Jesuit priest Juan Julio Wicht, another hostage, said that when a fellow hostage told him that he was about to be freed, he "felt it was a joke". But moments later, he said, "there was an explosion from deep below the residence and all the house vibrated."

The Japanese ambassador, Morihisa Aoki, the host of the December party that was attacked by Tupac Amaru, said that when he heard the first explosions, "The first thing that came into my head was . . . now my life will end."

Peruvian security experts said the attack hinged on meticulous intelligence investigations. Preparations for the raid began two weeks after the residence was taken, with the formation of an élite commando unit. CNN showed footage of the training with troops staging mock attacks on full-size plywood models of the residence's floors, complete with drawings of rebels.

The daily La República newspaper said that a team of miners from the central Andes was brought in to dig the tunnel network. Microphones inside the tunnels allowed agents to monitor conversations.

Expreso reported that the lower-ranking rebels, mostly teenagers, had become discontented and had pressed to return home. The central rebel demand throughout the crisis was for the release of more than 400 jailed comrades.

Commandos executed two rebels and killed others who were trying to surrender, security forces sources said. Two male rebels were captured alive in an upper-storey room, told to stand against a wall and shot with separate bursts of gunfire one after the other, the sources said.

At least one teenage rebel girl was also shot to death despite yelling to try to give herself up, according to an intelligence agent who monitored the raid through listening devices. "We surrender! We surrender!" the girl shouted as she was surprised in an upper room with at least one other female rebel, the source said.

Military sources said the commando units were under orders to take no prisoners and each rebel was given a final *coup de grâce* shot in the forehead to make sure they were dead. Mr Fujimori described the reports as "completely false". "There were no executions," he said.

Peru's agriculture minister, Rodolfo Munante, was quoted by a television channel as saying that a rebel had surrendered in the room where judges were being held hostage and that the commandos had killed him. However, Mr Munante later denied the report.

Another group of officers came into the first floor, where the hostages were gathered, and guided them out over the roof as the gun battle, which lasted nearly half an hour, continued.

The hostages said that a great feeling of unity among those living in different rooms had helped them survive their ordeal.

Mr Gumucio said: "We did gym together, we read the same books, we played the same games," in the Japanese ambassador's bedroom, where the diplomats were held.

He said they also had a kind of social life. "We would visit the judges, or they would invite us for lunch and sometimes we [the diplomats] were invited by the police."

● On Monday Japan announced an $11.5 million donation to Peru to modernise Lima hospitals and provide electricity in remote regions.

Comment, page 12
Washington Post, page 16

Generals rattle Turkey's Islamists

Chris Nuttall in Ankara

TURKEY'S first Islamist-led government survived a second confrontation with the military last weekend, but pressure from the generals is still expected to bring about its disintegration.

Necmettin Erbakan, the pro-Islamic Welfare party prime minister, bought more time for his 10-month-old administration by agreeing, at the end of an eight-hour national security council meeting last Saturday, to press ahead with reforms to curb Islamic extremism.

But his coalition partner, Tansu Ciller of the staunchly secular True Path party, is fighting an internal revolt against her support for the Islamists. Two cabinet ministers resigned in protest at her failure to withdraw from the government. Others may follow suit this week.

The military, which has staged three coups since 1960, appears determined to oust Welfare by parliamentary means. The armed forces see themselves as the last bastions of the secular republic founded by Kemal Ataturk in 1923, and Islamic fundamentalism, fostered by Welfare and Iran, as a bigger threat to the state than Kurdish separatism in the southeast.

At a record nine-hour security council meeting on February 28, Mr Erbakan was confronted with evidence of revolutionary activities and forced to accept an 18-point plan to counter Islamic extremism. But he has delayed implementing measures such as banning Muslim Brotherhood, restricting gun sales and reducing the influence of religious schools.

The tension increased when Mr Erbakan, aged 71, made his 25th pilgrimage to Mecca last month. He took many of his MPs with him on a chartered plane, and several were reported to have taken an oath there to fight for an Islamic state in Turkey.

The military responded with a disparaging statement from a general in the eastern province of Erzurum. Osman Ozbek called the prime minister a "pimp" for having enjoyed the hospitality of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia during the hajj, and said he was ready to fight the Islamists just as he had fought against Kurdish rebels.

"There are some sensitive developments happening in Turkey which disturb the public as well as the military," the chief of the general staff, Ismail Hakki Karadayi, said last week. "No one can remain silent about those developments. But the remedy is in the parliament."

When the generals speak, secular politicians listen. Last Saturday, the trade and industry minister, Yalim Erez, and the health minister, Yildirim Aktuna, both from True Path, resigned from the cabinet. "Turkey has turned into a country that does not know where it is going internationally," Mr Erez said. "It has yet to choose between East and West."

He advocated fresh elections, and an alliance between True Path, its centre-right rival the Motherland party, and the far-right Nationalist Action party to keep Welfare out of power.

Newspapers reported that as many as 20 True Path MPs would issue a declaration this week calling on the party to quit the coalition with Welfare. The Motherland party leader, Mesut Yilmaz, was said to be planning a censure motion once he was sure of the votes of the 276 MPs needed to topple the government.

The security council has given Mr Erbakan a month to prove he is sincere about making reforms which would stifle his party's Islamic ambitions. A key demand is the extension of compulsory education in the state secular system, thereby reducing the influence of religious schools.

In Brief

THE worldwide treaty banning chemical weapons took effect after more than 80 nations, including the US, ratified it, the United Nations announced. Russia's parliament has postponed adopting the ban.
Washington Post, page 15

HUMAN remains have been found at the crash site of an A-10 warplane that disappeared with its pilot, Captain Craig Buttons, in Colorado last month.
Washington Post, page 16

PAKISTAN'S navy chief, Admiral Mansurul Haque, resigned after the prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, ordered him to do so following allegations of corruption in the press.

THE retired United States general Colin Powell called for battalions of volunteers to help inner-city children in a speech that blended patriotism and charity, and sounded like the first address of the next presidential campaign.
Martin Walker, page 6

THE GERMAN president, Roman Herzog, expressed grief for "the most terrible atrocity inflicted on Guernica by German warplanes during the Spanish civil war, in Germany's first public atonement for the attack.

BUDIMAN Sudjatmiko, the leader of the banned Indonesian People's Democratic Party, was sentenced to 13 years for subversion, undermining state ideology and inciting anti-government demonstrations.
Comment, page 12

A FILIPINA aged 63 has become the oldest woman to give birth, after reportedly lying about her age at a fertility clinic in southern California.

THE judge who presided over O J Simpson's civil case denied a request for a new trial and said that Mr Simpson's "most grevious" conduct justified the $33.5 million award against him.

CHINA has executed three people and jailed 27 others for their part in bloody riots that shook the Muslim region of Xinjiang in February, officials said.

MUSLIM fundamentalist guerrillas in Algeria killed 93 people, cutting their throats or hacking them to death with farm tools, in a raid on a farming community in Bougara district, 25km from the capital Algiers.

MUSTAFA Ameen, one of the most influential journalists in Egypt and the Arab world, has died aged 83. A liberal, he once published some of Egypt's best-selling newspapers with his twin brother, Ali.

Europe envoys to return to Tehran

Ian Black

BRITAIN and its European Union partners were expected to return their ambassadors to Iran this week after withdrawing them last month in protest at Tehran's involvement in terrorism.

The envoys were due to go back after a meeting in Luxembourg on Wednesday when EU foreign ministers, bitterly divided over how far to go, are to approve a package of punitive measures that could include a formal arms embargo and a ban on high-level visits by Iranian officials.

These largely symbolic moves come in response to the sensational ruling of a Berlin court on April 10 that Iran's top leaders ordered the 1992 assassination of four Kurdish dissidents in Germany, providing a rare "smoking gun" directly linking the fundamentalist regime to terrorism.

But diplomats predict problems in agreeing even the limited measures under discussion: some member states oppose stricter visa controls while others wish to exempt President Hashemi Rafsanjani from the ban on visits. An effective arms embargo has been in place for years.

To the delight of the United States, which has long pursued Iran as a "rogue state", one certainty is the continued suspension of the EU's "critical dialogue" with Tehran. Allowing for a "decent interval" of the rest of this year, and with Britain's EU presidency starting in January, the dialogue should not resume before July 1998.

Anticipating the response, Iran's foreign minister, Ali Akbar Velayati, said last weekend that he expected the EU to be "realistic", predicting the safeguarding of European economic interests.

"Hawks" led by Britain and the Netherlands, current holder of the EU presidency, want agreement to expel Iranian intelligence officers. But there are fears that inevitable reprisals would cripple Western intelligence gathering in Iran, which is accused of secretly developing nuclear weapons and backing radical Muslim fundamentalists.

Conspicuously, no economic sanctions are likely. Officials believe that a proposal for a ban on trade fairs will be thrown out, to say nothing of more radical moves such as ending export credits.

Last month the British Foreign Office bowed to pressure from the Department of Trade and allowed UK firms selling oil and gas equipment to take part in a Tehran trade fair, though no officials were involved.

Supporters of author Salman Rushdie, still facing a death threat under the 1989 fatwa, complain there has been no mention of his case.

British officials defend the return of ambassadors by saying their withdrawal was never intended to be a punitive measure, but admit privately that an early co-ordinated move is better than the disunity that would be displayed if envoys went back one by one.

Officially, the line is that the ambassadors will monitor Iran's respect for tougher European expectations. In reality, Iran will again conclude that trade links matter more than state terrorism.

Punitive measures are supported by the US, trying desperately to close the gap with the EU after rows over sanctions targeting non-US companies trading with Iran.

The US undersecretary of state, Peter Tarnoff, last week discussed the issue with officials in Bonn, The Hague and London, where he saw the Foreign Office's political director, Jeremy Greenstock.

"Just focusing on the economic thing puts the bar too high for US-EU co-operation on Iran," said an American diplomat. "If you look at just that you miss the fact that there is now a great deal of common ground. This is not going back to business as usual."

The US, which has banned American companies from trading with or investing in Iran since 1995, is the only major power now imposing sanctions. European companies have picked up the lost business.

Officials in the Gulf region welcomed the decision to send ambassadors back to Tehran as a measure to reduce tension in the region. Iran greeted the news with studied indifference.



Yemeni women in Sanaa show their identification cards as they wait to vote in Yemen's parliamentary elections last Sunday. A total of 2,306 candidates are seeking 301 seats PHOTOGRAPH: ALI JOREKJI

Saharawis hope for end to bitter exile

Adela Gooch in Asmara camp, Algeria

THE FORMER US secretary of state, James Baker, has given Western Saharan refugees hope for a solution to the conflict with Morocco that forced their exile to a bleak corner of Algeria more than 20 years ago.

But his mission, bound by the need to restore United Nations' credibility on the issue and to stabilise relations between Algeria and Morocco, is unlikely to bring about the independent state for which they fought for 18 years. Instead, it may force them to accept some form of autonomy within Morocco.

Mr Baker, in his role as a special UN envoy, was met with the traditional ululating Arab welcome on his arrival last weekend at Asmara camp, one of four housing 160,000 refugees.

But it was painfully evident the Saharawis resent that their cause had been forgotten and are concerned that they might be sold out. "Iraq, yes — Morocco, no. Why?" said one of the crude hand-painted signs held up in the crowd.

Mr Baker is determined to find a swift way around the stalled peace plan rather than find himself embroiled in a conflict that has badly tarnished the UN. The US Congress cites the $250 million the UN has already spent on the dispute as a prime example of inefficiency.

"This is of course a very tough problem but it is not, my opinion, hopeless — or else I wouldn't be here," Mr Baker said after meeting the Saharawi president, Mohamed Abdelaziz, and members of the Polisario Front, a guerrilla group that has been fighting for Saharan independence since 1973 when the territory was a Spanish colony.

The UN has been mediating in the Western Sahara, a desert land rich in mineral reserves and fishing rights, since the 1960s when it called on Spain to decolonise. In 1975, with the Spanish dictator General Franco on his deathbed, Morocco staked its claim and 350,000 civilians moved into the territory. In 1976, Spain withdrew and the Polisario Front declared an independent Saharan Republic, which was subsequently recognised by more than 70 countries. Fighting broke out between Polisario, backed by the Algerian army, and Morocco. Thousands of refugees fled to Algeria and Mauritania.

In 1991, Polisario and Morocco agreed a ceasefire to hold a referendum to decide between integration with Morocco and independence — but have been unable to agree who would be eligible to vote.

The Saharawis accuse Morocco of flooding the area with people who do not belong to the nomadic tribes originally registered in a Spanish census, which put the population at 74,000.

Mr Baker's brief is not so much to push the referendum itself as to devise some alternative to the stark choice between independence or integration that could be approved through a poll. That compromise could be some form of autonomy. Although many Saharawis are determined to fight on, there are signs that part of the leadership would consider a compromise.

For the refugees, the strain of exile pinned on the hope of a triumphant return to the homeland is beginning to show. "They want to go back but to do so with heads held high," said a UN official. Deep down, they know that may be difficult.

Kuwait signals end to Saddam's pariah status

Kathy Evans

PRESIDENT Saddam Hussein seemed about to be rescued from nearly seven years of pariah status in the Arab world by a senior Kuwaiti official's declaration last weekend that the emirate would not oppose his presence at an Arab summit.

The Arab states are considering holding a mini-summit to discuss the stalled Middle East peace process. Kuwait's foreign minister, Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmed, told the Lebanese weekly Afkar that if such a summit was in the Arab interest, Kuwait would attend "with or without Saddam Hussein".

The statement crowns several weeks of political successes by the Iraqi leader, and coincides with his 60th birthday, marked by celebrations and street parties throughout the country.

In the 18 years that President Saddam has been in power, his regime has cost the Iraqi people dear.

The two wars against Iran and Kuwait left 1.2 million Iraqis dead, and he is said by exiles to be responsible for the death of 182,000 Kurds and the imprisonment and execution of 200,000 Iraqis. The rule of fear has, until now, ensured his survival.

Abroad, Iraqi opposition groups are divided and running out of money. At home, their presence is confined to one town, Sulaymaniyah in the north.

The last attempt to overthrow him, last June, failed disastrously, and led to the arrest of 124 officers. The coup attempt was said to have been infiltrated by the security services from the very start.

In the past few weeks the president has notched up some notable successes. The first shipments of food arrived last month, allowing the regime to increase its hard-pressed people's rations. The deliveries, based on the United Nations agreement in December to allow Iraq to export $2 billion-worth of oil every six months, have already brought down the price of some basic commodities by a third.

Although the oil sales and receipts are scrutinised by the UN, economists say the income will enable the regime to spend more on arms and spare parts.

The oil-for-food deal has whetted the appetite of foreign businessmen and oil companies, anxious to profit from the reconstruction of a country that has the world's second-largest oil reserves.

Last month the Iraqi parliament ratified a deal with Russia to develop the southern Qurna oilfield, at a cost of $200 million.

Exiled Iraqi politicians are in despair at the recent strengthening of the regime.

Yeltsin and Jiang cosy up

David Hearst in Moscow

IN A diplomatic love-fest, overtly directed at the West, Presidents Boris Yeltsin and Jiang Zemin last week hastily proclaimed a new "multi-polar" world order in which Russia and China set themselves against Washington's claim to be the only superpower.

After the two leaders signed a joint declaration, which the Russians described as a breakthrough in troubled relations between Moscow and Beijing, Mr Yeltsin appeared temporarily to abandon his long touted special relationship with President Bill Clinton.

Looking grim and in some discomfort, Mr Yeltsin said after the signing: "Someone is longing for a single-polar world. He wants to decide things himself."

Although officials of Russia and China said their joint declaration was not aimed at establishing a "counter-bloc" to Nato, the political message of the new-found friendship was clear.

They were quite specific about Nato's enlargement. "Both sides express concern over the attempt at enlarging and strengthening military blocs because such a tendency may pose a threat to the security of some countries and aggravate regional and global tension."

They similarly warned against the Western use of United Nations peacekeeping forces as a cover for its forces. The Chinese official Xinhua news agency quoted the declaration as saying: "No country should seek hegemony, practise power politics or monopolise international affairs."

Comment, page 12
Washington Post, page 15

Chad poised for oil boom

Paul Brown

CHAD, one of the poorest countries in the world, is about to be transformed into a booming oil-rich economy if the World Bank and three multinational companies have their way.

Exxon, Shell and Elf plan to spend $3.2 billion on developing three Chadian oilfields, and the World Bank will partly finance a 1,600km pipeline to the coast. The Chadian economy is expected to double in size in 10 years.

Environmental groups are alarmed about the possible effects of such a huge development and cash influx on an unstable country, where war with Libya in the 1980s gave way to civil wars in the 1990s.

In March, President Idriss Deby was accused by Amnesty International of torture and the extra-judicial execution of petty thieves.

Across the border in Nigeria's Ogoniland, the scars of an earlier scramble for African oil remain unhealed.

Exxon is the operator for the consortium and has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Chadian government to extract 900 million barrels of oil, starting before 2000. Exxon and Shell will each put up 40 per cent of the money, and Elf 20 per cent. Chad expects to receive $6.4 billion in royalties from the deal.

But the World Bank, which is contributing $160 million to the pipeline, insists on a full environmental assessment and public consultation before committing itself. It will grant a 40-year loan at 1 per cent interest to "buy" the Chadian government's share of the pipeline project.

Internal Exxon documents seen by the Guardian say the bank's involvement is vital insurance. Export credit guarantees to cover the total investment will be sought from the United States and European governments.

The oilfields will mean resettling tribal peoples, and the pipeline will pass through "areas of varying ecological sensitivity" in Cameroon, before reaching the Atlantic terminal at Kribi.

The bank says every effort will be made to develop an environmentally acceptable route. Philip Benoit in Washington said: "We are aware that this project is a test of the bank's credibility. We are not intending to give Chad the money and walk away." Mr Benoit insists that under the bank's guidance the oil revenues will be used to provide basic health care and schooling.

Chad, with a population of 6 million and a per capita income of $250, rates 150th out of 160 countries in the world development index.

Tony Juniper of Friends of the Earth, part of a green international consortium opposed to the scheme, said: "This looks like the rape of an African country's oil reserves to make the multinational oil companies even richer . . . None of the money gets to the people whose homes and way of life is destroyed."

ANC women back Winnie

David Beresford in Cape Town

WINNIE MANDELA signalled that she remains a force to be reckoned with in South African politics last Sunday as she retained the presidency of the Women's League of the African National Congress.

The former wife of President Nelson Mandela swept aside renewed scandal to crush a challenge from the most prominent woman in the ANC government, the health minister, Nkosazana Zuma, at a much-delayed annual congress in the town of Rustenburg.

The Women's League has been in a state of limbo for two years after 11 of the most prominent leaders — led by Adelaide Tambo, the widow of the former ANC president Oliver Tambo — walked out protesting at Ms Mandela's "autocratic and undemocratic leadership".

Ms Mandela's triumph came at the culmination of a difficult week. It was disclosed that she was making money by selling to tourists bottles of soil from the garden of the Soweto home she shared with Mr Mandela early in their married life. And the government had to admit in the face of parliamentary questioning that it was still attempting to recover money she owed for the unauthorised use of two state luxury cars and a mobile phone after she was fired as a junior minister in 1995.

It was also revealed last week that she had been trying to sell the rights to a "tell-all" interview to British TV channels for $800,000.

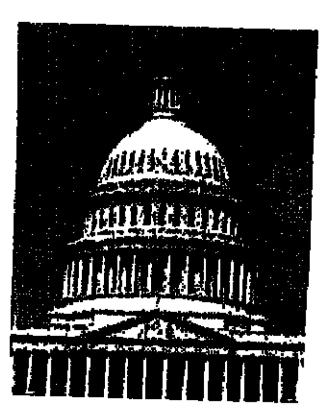
Her arch-rival Dr Zuma is no stranger to controversy herself, however. Last year she was the subject of a long-running and furious dispute over the commissioning of a raunchy, multi-million rand anti-Aids play intended to persuade South African youth of the pleasures of safe sex. There were also allegations of misappropriation of funds.

The health minister has been importing hundreds of Cuban doctors to work in South Africa in the face of protests from local members of the profession who insist that the Cubans are under-qualified.

Dr Zuma failed even to mount a challenge to her rival at the conference, withdrawing her candidature for the presidency when it became apparent that she would not get sufficient votes to be seconded under conference rules.

Ms Mandela was left facing a run-off against her deputy, a former ANC guerrilla, Thandi Modise, whom she trounced by 656 votes to 114.

Do-gooders rally to plight of poor



The US this week

Martin Walker

THE MEDIA event of the week was a big jamboree in Philadelphia with Bill Clinton, George Bush and Jimmy Carter, and with Colin Powell as master of ceremonies, all celebrating volunteers for charity and calling for more. It was not easy to be at all critical of this, in the extraordinary blend of sanctimony, exaggeration and hype which sustained the affair. The main event took place in the 18th century hall where the Declaration of Independence was signed. And many were the references to the Founding Fathers, and how they would have approved this summons to re-awaken the American spirit.

In the administration's preliminary briefings on the matter, the scale of the problem was precisely defined. There are some 15 million children deemed to be at risk, from their family and from income circumstances. Of these, half may be expected on current form to graduate from high school, get jobs, settle down, raise families and generally join the American mainstream.

The other half are likely to drop out of school, fail to find any worthwhile employment, and get into trouble with the law. They will prove very expensive indeed. The combined cost of police and prison, medical treatment (often in hospital emergency rooms) and other social factors is estimated to be about $1 million over each of their lifetimes. Add it all up, and 7 million troubled young members of the underclass could end up costing the country $7,000 billion over the next 50 years or so. The United States' current gross domestic product stands at just over $7,000 billion a year, so this adds up to an entire year of economic output.

At least the scale of the challenge is being recognised. Powell has said bluntly that he wants to give corporate America "a guilt trip" about their need to pitch in and help. He adds that he wants to tell America's company directors: "You've all been talking about less government and let the market work. Well, you're the market."

And in co-ordination with the White House, a group of charities and big business, Powell has come up with an action plan and a series of targets. It is based on the success of the Big Brothers programme, which links a deprived inner-city child with an adult volunteer who is expected to act as a surrogate relative, offering him or her time, moral support and, with luck, a good example. The first thorough survey of the programme, published two years ago, looked at children aged 10-16 in eight cities. It found that those with a Big Brother or a Big Sister were only half as likely to use drugs, and were far more likely to stay in school.

There are currently just over 100,000 volunteers in this programme. The new effort seeks to triple that, and enroll 1 million such adult mentors in total. California alone has set a state target of 250,000. Some churches, corporations and colleges have rallied to the call. The AFL-CIO trade union confederation hopes to organise school-to-work experience for 500,000 youngsters who might not otherwise get even a taste of the labour market.

The Presidents' Summit for America's Future, to give the Philadelphia appeal its formal title, has targeted five sensible provisions which, it is believed, can help children from the underclass: to provide a lasting relationship with a caring adult; to provide a safe, adult-supervised place to play, study or just find refuge in the dangerous hours between the end of school and bedtime; to guarantee them all health care — more than 10 million American children currently have no insurance cover; to provide marketable skills, and a way into the adult economy, which is where the AFL-CIO comes in; and to instil a sense of service, to make young people feel that they can be part of the solution.

The Philadelphia summit set itself the goal to provide these five areas of help to 2 million children, and to make at least one of them available to another 5 million. All this is very heartening and hopeful. But it is also an attempt to drain a swamp that is getting deeper far more quickly than charity can pump it dry.

The new Republican-drafted Welfare bill, which Clinton signed into law last year, will make the poor even poorer. On its most generous assumptions — that two-thirds of long-term welfare recipients will find jobs, and that the states will not cut their own welfare budgets — some 11 million American families will lose income under the bill. Some 2.6 million people, including 1.1 million children, will drop below the poverty line (currently $12,158 for a family of three). Eight million families with children, including many working families, will lose an average $1,300 each because of the reductions in food stamps.

These figures come from an analysis by the Urban Institute, using the Clinton administration's own computer model. No wonder that Peter Edelman, who resigned his post as assistant secretary of health and human services in protest at the bill despite his long friendship with the president, calls it "the worst thing Bill Clinton has done".

Perhaps Clinton went to Philadelphia to make amends. Perhaps he went to see the stars who flocked to the event, although it is not immediately obvious what Tony Bennett, Oprah Winfrey and John Travolta have to do with good works. Still, when you have ripped the heart out of the old welfare system like Clinton has, or waffled like Bush did about "a thousand points of charitable light" instead of having a domestic policy, then you might as well throw some star power at the problem of poverty in America.

COLIN POWELL'S CHALLENGE

SET YOUR SITES ON VOLUNTEERING

WE WE WE WE WE WE WE WE WE WE WE WE WE WE WE WE WE WE WE WE

ME

Unfortunately, the only American I know who actually seems to have found a way to end poverty was not there. Don Anderson is unique. He is the only Shakespeare-loving, green-eyed, bagpipe-playing, horse-riding black man I have met. The grandson of a slave, and the son of a black doctor who made some money and bought up the slave graveyard of the old plantation, Don came home from studying at the London School of Economics to work in Congress.

He worked on the staff of that extraordinary congressman from Harlem, Adam Clayton Powell, and as general counsel for the sub-committee on poverty Anderson drafted a lot of the sixties' legislation on the War on Poverty and the Great Society. More than most people, he saw what was going wrong with that well-intentioned disaster.

"In every place, I saw the same thing: people from Washington would go in and provide leadership at the local level. That's wrong. That takes the initiative away from the people of the community," he explains.

For 20 years now, Anderson has been trying something different, on a shoestring budget of $500,000 a year which he raises for his National Association for the Southern Poor. He has two inspirations: Britain's House of Commons, and Thomas Jefferson's definition of a real democracy as something that starts at the most local level.

"I hope they will adopt the subdivision of our counties into wards," Jefferson wrote. "Each ward would thus become a small republic within itself and every man in the state would thus become an active member of the common government."

Simple, really. Anderson goes into the poorest counties of rural America, talks to black people, and suggests they organise. He calls the system the assembly. Five people, then 10, then 20. When they have 50, they can call themselves a conference. Define a goal — a new road, a small scholarship fund. Start working at it, and success slowly breeds success. Two or three local conferences then start electing their representatives to an Assembly, and the goals grow with the structure.

Fifty miles south-west of Richmond, the capital of the old Confederacy, is Surry County, the first of the showcases of the Anderson method. They closed the county jail last year because there is not enough crime to justify keeping it open. There is a new high school, a public health clinic and a recreation centre. An uneducated Surry County farm labourer, who used to work in the tobacco fields, now sings with New York's Metropolitan Opera thanks to two decades of the Assembly.

ANDERSON does not provide any money. He hasn't any. He just gives advice, one small community at a time. He'll help find a newly-qualified doctor to open a practice in an area that has never had one. He can give legal help in dealing with county government, or in applying to the Washington bureaucracy for grants for low-income housing.

Part of this is straightforward politics. Any group which can bring 20 or 30 people together, and can deploy 100 or more votes, is going to attract the sympathetic interest of local politicians — that is often how the first road gets paved, or the new teacher gets hired. But then — and this is a very slow process, marked by setbacks and failures — self-confidence takes over. A community gets a sense of its potential.

"Usually they start with insubstantial ideas. But once they have had minimal success — like getting a road paved — they become bold. They have brought millions of dollars into these areas," he says. "Unfortunately, most anti-poverty efforts today attack symptoms — like teen pregnancy — instead of root problems. The way to prevent transmission of poverty to the next generation is education. I have seen the complete transformation of counties, the children of sharecroppers going to college and becoming doctors."

He started off very small, in Surry County. Now he has an office in Washington, where he lives, another in Atlanta, and a third in North Carolina. There are now Assemblies in 258 rural counties across the South.

"I grew up in the apartheid system of the South. We could never go to restaurants, to theatres. We existed essentially in an all-black world. This was in Charlotte, North Carolina, where I lived my first 11 years. As I was growing up, I remember everybody around me saying 'We've got to to get organised'. But nobody said how. That was left to me, and I found the model in London. The idea of the Assembly is simply a copy of the House of Commons. Our goal in every community we enter is to give local leaders the tools to organise themselves to solve their own problems."

Anderson is dubious about the grandiose ambition of the Philadelphia summit. He respects Powell's intentions, admires his skill in getting banks and companies such as McDonald's and Coca-Cola to pledge the time of their staff to work in the inner cities. But he fears that even if it succeeds, it will help embed the culture of failure.

"We as a nation have made a terrible mistake by sending volunteers into poor rural communities to do public service. That always takes the initiative away from the community," Anderson insists. "An essential tenet of what we do is that neither our staff nor board will advance any ideas to a local community. We will help it organise itself and provide technical assistance, but the community must solve its problems itself."

Don Anderson is a man without hype. You won't find him doing a Colin Powell on the cover of the current Newsweek, pointing his finger like a recruiting poster and saying "I Want You" to volunteer for America. Instead, he will be in rural Mississippi, setting up another Assembly.

Tide turns against Bulgarian élites

Julian Borger in Sofia

THIS is pay-back time for the Bulgarian police. On the roads leading from central Sofia to the well-heeled suburbs at the foot of Mount Vitosha, they have been stopping some of the new Mercedes and Audis that used to speed nonchalantly past them.

The astonished drivers have been asked some unheard-of questions, such as: "Where did you get the money to afford such a car?" and "Have you paid taxes on that income?" Soon after, tax inspectors have been arriving at their villas to ask some questions of their own.

These are the most obvious signs that the tide may have turned in Bulgaria since mass protests in January brought down a Socialist government and forced new elections last month.

The victors, the liberal Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), now face the task of starting almost literally from square one. Not only has Bulgaria lagged far behind most other east European countries in reforming its economy, the country's reserves have been drained virtually dry by embezzlement on a scale unrivalled anywhere in post-cold war Europe.

The scam was simple, but it worked for years. Former communist nomenklatura and secret service agents set up phantom clusters of companies (known as the "economic groups") which then borrowed money from the country's new banks, run by their friends and accomplices. Alternatively, they bought cheap from, and sold dear to, friendly state enterprises.

The funds promptly disappeared abroad. The bank, or state enterprise, announced it was having financial difficulties and the central bank dutifully rescued it. With their contacts in the bureaucracy and the party, the "executives" of the economic groups were untouchables.

The economy contracted by 11 per cent in 1996 and, as national reserves dwindled, a run on the currency, the lev, triggered a short burst of hyperinflation, slashing the value of wages and pensions and bringing much of the country out on the street.

The incoming deputy prime minister, Alexander Boshkov, said it was too late to try to recoup the lost resources, which he estimated at "a few billion dollars". The task now, he said, was to excise the "economic groups" from the state. "It is a parasite inside the body, but there is a medicine, and the medicine is privatisation."

The new parliament is due to convene next week, but much of the groundwork has already been done by a UDF caretaker prime minister, Stefan Sofianski. He stopped central bank credits, stabilising the currency. He criminalised tax avoidance for the first time, introduced a witness-protection programme to combat the mafia and ordered the arrest of bank directors who doled out unsecured loans.

When the new government is sworn in this month, its main task will be to create a currency board, as advocated by the International Monetary Fund. It replaces the central bank, eliminating any discretion over monetary policy, and ties the money supply directly to reserves.

The credit squeeze will force the new government into rapid restructuring and privatisation, which Krassen Stanchev, the director of Sofia's Institute for Market Economics, believes will raise the unemployment rate from 12 per cent to 18 per cent — a further 280,000 people out of work. He believes the government will be able to take the strain and see the reforms through.

Georgi Parvanov, the new leader of the Bulgarian Socialist Party, thinks otherwise. "If large enterprises are suddenly and brutally liquidated and hundreds of thousands of people go out on the streets, it will be very difficult to control events," he said.

There is a lot riding on the shoulders of the new prime minister, Ivan Kostov. One of the new government's political advisers, Ivan Krastev, believes failure would mean a decisive victory for organised crime. "On one side there is Kostov. On the other side there is 'Albanisation' — the collapse of the state," he said.

'Parochial' politics bring global danger

Ian Black

OBSESSIONS with domestic politics by the world's leading powers are weakening the international community's ability to deal with foreign threats and crises, a leading think-tank warned last week.

Issuing its annual report for 1996-97, the International Institute for Strategic Studies identifie "a pervasive and persistent parochialism" that is restricting the potential for multilateral action.

Citing Albania and Zaire, institute experts predicted that inward-looking countries and blocs, including Nato and the European Union, would become even more reluctant to take risks to help restore order in faraway troublespots or to prevent famines.

Lack of stable governments, military overstretch, shrinking defence budgets and fear of open-ended intervention were all cited as reasons for inaction — combined with scant domestic support if there was no obvious gain.

"The cold war tendency to see core interests indirectly at stake in distant parts of the globe has now totally eroded," the report said. "Comfortably cocooned in their own sense of security, citizens of democratic countries are in no mood to sacrifice their well-being for supposed international advantage, nor to rally to the service of a purely humanitarian goal."

But the report also warned of the need to take action against "rogue" states such as Iraq or North Korea, which it was "virtually impossible" to stop acquiring potentially devastating biological weapons and toxins.

"The industrial democracies must be prepared to defend their forces and populations by force if and when deterrence and diplomacy fail to prevent aggression by rogue states armed with biological weapons," the institute said.

There is also growing concern about the threat posed by the spread of cruise missiles as weak international controls are easily circumvented. "Slowing the spread of these critical enabling technologies for highly effective cruise missiles will help defensive systems keep pace with threat improvements," it said.

The report was pessimistic about prospects for the Middle East peace process and worried by the fracturing of the Gulf war coalition as Iraq's Saddam Hussein, still firmly in power, continued to "play parts of the outside world off against each other".

There was gloom about Russia — "a country in waiting" — where declining industrial production, a frustrated military, and the criminalisation of civil society were seen as a recipe for continuing instability, despite President Boris Yeltsin's improved health.

In Asia, the institute identified the need to develop coherent policies for handling an increasing assertive China, suffering from "potent paranoia", as the main challenge for the world. It said that "China is planting and feeding seeds of worry about the implications of a rising China".

It warned that European parochialism was strengthening as efforts focused on the single currency and further integration.

Peace in Bosnia, it said, remained fragile as aspects of the 1995 Dayton Accords remained unfulfilled. "Unless these problems are addressed, and resolved, the international community will have to choose between staying militarily engaged for years, or even decades, and leaving the Bosnians to their own devices, at the risk of violence erupting once again."

Strategic Survey 1996-97, Oxford University Press for the IISS, £25

Chechens get Islamic justice

David Hearst in Moscow

AN ISLAMIC sharia court conducted its first public execution of a convicted murderer in Chechenia last week, a stark illustration that the justice system in the breakaway republic is now wholly independent of Russia's.

The condemned, identified only as "Ibrahim", from the settlement of Bachi-Yurt, had his throat slit by a group of hooded men. His death was shown throughout the republic on state-run television.

The youth was found guilty of murdering a man, his wife and his 16-year-old son with an axe. The authorities said he butchered the entire family while under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

Although the sharia court has in the past handed out ritual beatings to petty offenders, this is believed to be the first time that an Islamic court has passed the death sentence on a native Chechen, although videos have been on sale in Grozny of a Russian soldier accused of atrocities having his throat slit during the recent war.

Sharip Yusupov, Chechenia's representative in Moscow, said Ibrahim was "a real brute who got everything he deserved". He said the execution was televised in order to demonstrate the "inevitability of punishment" and to satisfy the demands of the Chechen tradition of the blood feud.

Mr Yusupov said that relatives of the victims were among the hooded executioners, and that accused's family had turned him in to keep the family honour intact.

If the court had not intervened, under the tradition of the blood feud the relatives of the victims would have been duty-bound to kill relatives of the offender.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
May 4 1997

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Fear of polling day chaos as bombs disrupt traffic

THE IRA continued its rolling programme of disruption on mainland Britain when a series of telephoned bomb warnings closed airports and once again brought motorways to a standstill for several hours. There have been six days of disruption since the start of the election campaign.

On Friday last week two small bombs exploded in the morning rush hour at the foot of an electricity pylon close to the M6 near Walsall. A 10-mile stretch of that motorway was closed, and other alerts closed sections of the M1 and M18 in the Midlands.

On Tuesday morning security alerts closed sections of six motorways around London and also led to the partial closure of Heathrow and Gatwick airports.

John Major responded by saying that the British nation would not be cowed by threats from the IRA.

The few actual bombs planted during the current campaign have been small and have caused little damage, though the disruption and economic cost have been considerable. But police sources rejected suggestions by some media commentators that warnings should be ignored, saying that if they lowered their guard the IRA could respond with a "real" bomb.

The Home Office announced unprecedented security plans for polling day, which involved the screening of some 45,000 polling stations and 600 counting centres. Arrangements have been made to allow voting to continue into a second day if the process was significantly disrupted.

A TRANSSEXUAL who was born a female lost a long court battle for legal recognition as the father of his long-term partner's four children. In a test case that essentially confirmed the British legal position that a man is defined by his chromosomes, the European Court of Human Rights dismissed, by 16 votes to four, a claim by Stephen Whittle that the British ruling denied his rights to family life.

Dr Whittle, aged 41, a law lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan university, underwent a sex change operation more than 20 years ago. His lives with Sarah Rutherford and the four children she conceived through artificial insemination by donor. He said he was disappointed by the failure of the test case, which would have brought Britain into line with most other European countries, which recognised sex change.

The judgment is a setback for two male-to-female transsexuals who are going to the Strasbourg court to challenge the Government's refusal to allow them to change their birth certificates to reflect their adopted gender. They have the backing of the European Commission of Human Rights. But that commission also backed Dr Whittle's case.

BRITISH proposals to safeguard the quality of its beef were again rejected by the European Commission as not good enough to justify the lifting of its ban on exports.

The Agriculture Minister, Douglas Hogg, making a rare frontline appearance in the election campaign, insisted that the Government's measures fulfilled its obligations to eradicate BSE, or "mad cow disease", as a preliminary to getting the export ban lifted.

Mr Hogg claimed that it was European agriculture ministers, reacting to their own electoral pressures, who were blocking the resumption of exports. But a leaked letter from the Commission voiced concern about the adequacy of paper records for individual cattle, designed to certify that they come from BSE-free herds.

A LEADING hospital revised its health screening questionnaire after a house officer died of an Aids-related illness days after taking up his new job.

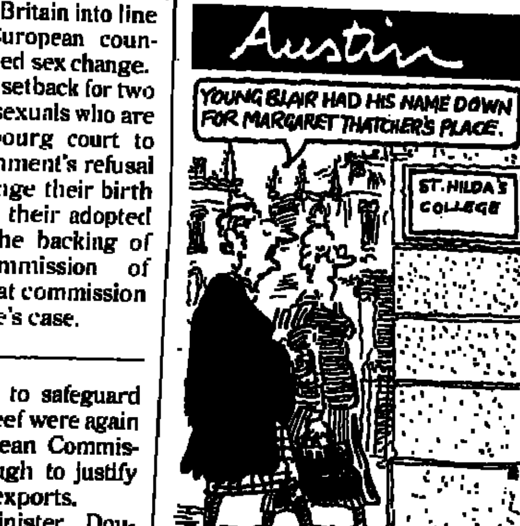
Dr Olukayode Fasawe, aged 28, was said to have completed a health questionnaire "satisfactorily" before being appointed to the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital. But he went sick on his second day at work and died of acute pneumonia six days later. An inquest was told the HIV virus had led to Aids.

News of his death prompted a flood of calls from worried patients to the hospital and two others where he had worked — the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital and Frimley Park Hospital in Surrey.

The Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital will now ask job applicants specifically: "Do you have or are you carrying any serious communicable diseases such as Aids or hepatitis, or believe that your judgment could be affected by any condition or illness that you have?"

AN ATTEMPT to storm the last all-female bastion of Oxford university was beaten off when the governing body of St Hilda's College voted by a narrow majority not to let men in as fellows. The college suffers a shortage of female academics, but students feared that to allow male academics would be a step towards the admission of male undergraduates.

But a prestigious all-male institution — the Leander Rowing Club at Henley-on-Thames — voted to overturn its 179-year ban on women members. Its male members voted "by a clear majority" to rewrite the rules in the knowledge that refusal to do so would bar the club from applying for a £1.5million National lottery grant to improve its facilities.



A rattling good yarn . . . The largest tapestry woven in Britain this century is removed from its loom in Edinburgh. Destined for the new British Library in London, the 7 sq m work used 112 kg of wool and involved 7,000 weaver hours, following an R B Kitaj design. Colin St John Wilson, the architect of the library, said: 'It's fantastic. The colours are simply stunning' PHOTOGRAPH: MURDO MacLEOD

Howard rebuked over IRA lifers

David Sharrock

THE Home Secretary, Michael Howard, suffered a judicial rebuke last week when his decision that two IRA bombers should remain in jail for the rest of their lives was overturned by the High Court in Belfast.

Paul Kavanagh and Thomas Quigley, who were convicted and given life sentences at the Old Bailey in 1985 for three murders caused by IRA bombs at a burger bar and at Chelsea Barracks, were challenging Mr Howard's ruling that they must remain in jail until they die.

The trial judge, Mr Justice Cowan, recommended that the men, both from Belfast, should each serve a minimum of 35 years. But David Waddington, then home secretary, told Parliament that he had revised their tariff up to 50 years, and Lord Lane, then lord chief justice, stated: "I would not release them at all."

Kavanagh and Quigley claimed in their applications for review that Mr Howard was required to inform them of his reasons for failing to follow the view of the trial judge.

The details of the decision will be studied by the lawyers of more than 20 other life sentence prisoners, such as Myra Hindley and the police killer Harry Roberts, who have been informed in recent months by the Home Secretary that for them "life really will mean life" and they will never leave prison.

Mr Justice Kerr said in his judgment that Mr Howard's rejection of the IRA men's application relied on the assertion that the judicial view of their sentence had been expressed by Lord Lane. "I simply cannot accept that claim. The Home Secretary is required to consult the trial judge as well as the Lord Chief Justice."

To suggest that the judicial view was that the tariff should be "whole life" was to dismiss entirely the opinion of the trial judge.

Mr Justice Kerr added: "While it may be true that the Home Secretary was not strictly required to fix upon a tariff, the suggestion that he did not do so appears to me to be somewhat contrived, if not, indeed, disingenuous. I consider that the Home Secretary was obliged to explain why he was minded to depart from the judicial view expressed . . . and to increase the tariff beyond that which had been fixed by the former home secretary. I will, therefore, accede to the application to quash his decision, fixing the tariff in each case as 'whole life'."

Quigley's solicitor, Pearse MacDermott, said after the hearing: "Mr Howard's ministerial career has sustained a further lash from the bench. We earnestly hope that when our client's tariff is reconsidered it will not be by the same home secretary."

Cabbie's call to Hollywood

Vivek Chaudhary

IF COLIN HAYDAY was like most London taxi drivers, his passengers probably would have endured one of the usual diatribes about traffic, the state of the nation or the England football team.

Fortunately for him, he got them in the back of the cab and talked about films and scripts.

In fact, the chirpy cabbie was so good at it that he landed himself a £5.9 million film deal after an extraordinary series of encounters with film-makers who by chance hailed his cab.

Mr Hayday's journey to Hollywood began at Paddington station in 1994, when he picked up advertising copywriter Joe Reynolds. Weaving through London traffic, he began telling Mr Reynolds about a property deal he was negotiating that collapsed at the last minute after it emerged that some of those involved were terrorists. It would, he said, make a great film.

Mr Reynolds said: "When I got in Colin's taxi I was like most Londoners who had just finished a long train journey — rather reserved and impatient to get home. But Colin began to tell me the story and after 20 minutes when we got to my home I was on the edge of my seat. It was a very exciting story."

The two men collaborated on a script for a film. It was given the working title The Opportunist, and was written by Mr Reynolds.

Soon after the completion of the script, Mr Hayday, aged 53, picked up another passenger and — sure enough — the conversation turned to films. The passenger turned out to be Neil Jordan, director of The Crying Game and Michael Collins, who asked to see a copy of the script. He was very positive but too busy to do it.

On Christmas Eve 1995, Mr Hayday picked up John Frank Rosenblum, head of the Hollywood company Lighthouse Productions. Last March he bought the rights to the film, which has a £10 million budget.

Mr Hayday, who earns around £200 a week and has been driving a cab for 30 years, is to split his £5.9 million pay-off for the script with Mr Reynolds.

Widowers fight rules

Clare Dyer

TWO fathers caring for their children after their wives died of cancer are taking the Government to the European Commission of Human Rights in Strasbourg over rules which deny widows' benefits and tax allowances to widowers.

Kevin Willis, from Bristol, and Christopher Crossland, who lives near Salisbury, in Wiltshire, accuse the Government of breaching article six of the European Convention on Human Rights, which guarantees respect for family life.

A victory at the court, which could take up to five years to reach a final decision, would affect an estimated 20,000 widowed fathers at a cost, according to government figures, of £490 million a year.

Both men gave up "comfortable" salaries to look after their children after their mothers died.

The Inland Revenue refused to allow the men to claim bereavement allowance, which can be claimed by widows in the year of a husband's death and the following year.

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UK tops Europe's child poverty league

David Brindle

BRITAIN has more children living in poverty — one in three — than any other European country, according to an unpublished study by Eurostat, the European Union statistics agency.

In terms of sheer numbers, the official study also suggests that Britain has by far the most adults living below the poverty line.

Proportionally to population size, only Portugal is shown to have more adults and children trapped in poverty than does Britain.

This confirmation of the growth of inequality under the Conservatives is ready for publication — but, it is understood, has been withheld until after the election at the request of the Government.

It is believed that the findings, which have been seen by the Guardian, were some time ago made available by Eurostat to the Government's Office for National Statistics.

Tony Blair has declined to commit Labour to a target for reducing inequality, preferring to declare that "if the next Labour government has not raised the living standards of the poorest by the end of its time in office, it will have failed".

The Tories claim that everybody's absolute living standards have risen. Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, said last Sunday: "It is a myth that the poor are getting poorer . . . this view is based on highly dubious statistics."

The Eurostat study covers the 12 EU member states in 1993 and for the first time gauges poverty by a common measure of income, as opposed to expenditure, set at 50 per cent of the net mean average.

This is the same measure used by the Government in its "household below average income" (HBAI) statistics. Ministers insist it does not represent a poverty line, but Eurostat says it is a "reasonable surrogate" in terms of the EU's standing definition of poverty.

This, adopted in 1984, reads: "The poor shall be taken to mean persons, families and groups of persons where resources (material, cultural and social) are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in the member states in which they live."

For each of the 12 states surveyed, Eurostat calculates a "Gini coefficient" which shows the spread of incomes ranging from no inequality at 0 to total inequality at 1. Britain's figure is 0.37, with only Portugal (0.42) and Greece (0.38) having higher ratings and Italy having the same. The average is 0.35, with Denmark the lowest at 0.25.

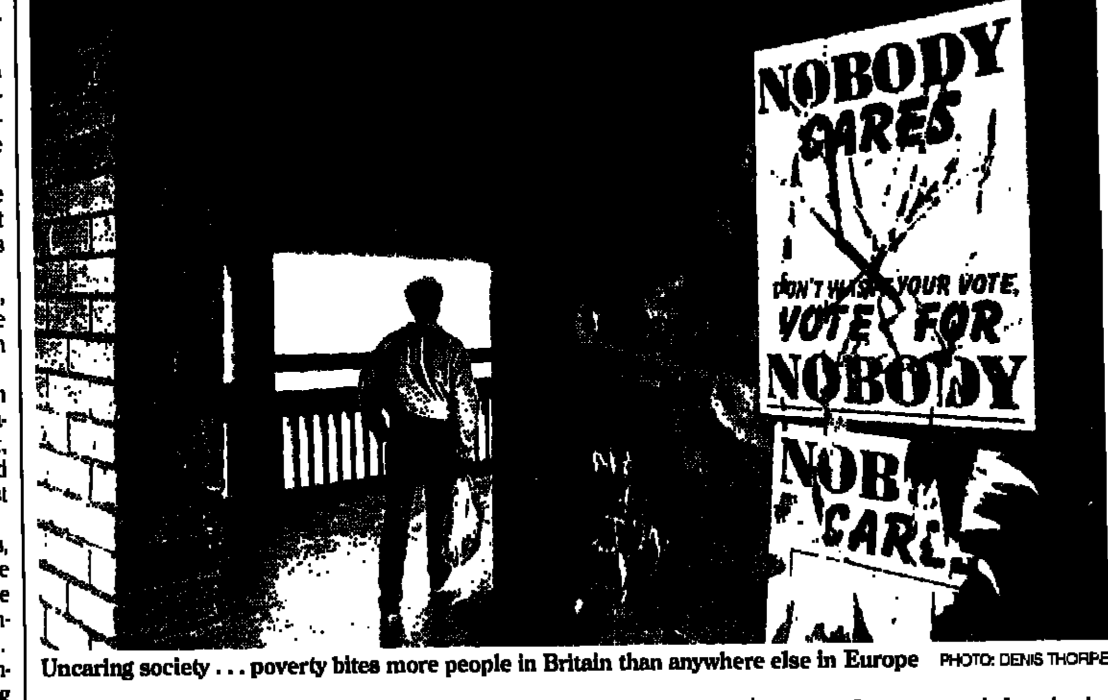
Taking the 50 per cent income line, which the Government puts at £123 a week after housing costs in 1993/94, Eurostat says 5.5 million British households fell below it.

This is almost 1 million more households than the equivalent figure for Germany. Similarly, Eurostat says 12.8 million individuals, of whom 3.9 million were children, fell below the line in Britain. The next highest totals are both attributed to Italy: 10.9 million individuals and 2.2 million children.

Perhaps the fairest yardsticks used by Eurostat are those showing proportions of each population below the poverty line. In Britain, 23 per cent of households are put below the line, a figure exceeded only by Greece (24 per cent) and Portugal (29 per cent). For individuals, Britain's 22 per cent below the line is matched by Greece and exceeded only by Portugal (26 per cent).

For children, however, Britain's 32 per cent below the line is the worst by some margin. Ireland is next, with 28 per cent.

Eurostat's assessment comes after the Child Poverty Action Group accused the Tories of pursuing a deliberate "strategy of inequality" over the past 18 years, during which real income of the poorest tenth of society fell 13 per cent while that of the richest tenth soared by 65 per cent. The group says, however, that Labour has not convinced it that it would reverse the trend.



Uncaring society . . . poverty bites more people in Britain than anywhere else in Europe PHOTO: DENIS THORPE

Remnants of British empire demand full citizenship rights

Ian Black

THE next government will face mounting pressure from Britain's remaining colonies — now known as dependent territories — after Hong Kong is returned to China on June 30.

After years of being outshone by the largest and most glittering jewel in the imperial crown, a number of tiny islands are planning to bring their demands for full citizenship and more economic development to Whitehall.

The Dependent Territories Association says it will be mounting a campaign to ensure that Britain honours its colonial commitments.

Attention has recently focused on the lonely, economically troubled South Atlantic outpost of St Helena, site of Napoleon's exile and home to 6,000 natives, known as "Saints". Publicly the dependent territories show solidarity, but the 13 remaining are divided by different interests.

Gibraltar and the Falklands have British citizenship (linked to the Spanish and Argentine sovereignty claims). Wealthier territories such as the Cayman Islands — with 300 banks — do not need it.

The most isolated, such as Pitcairn in the Pacific, or uninhabited areas, such as the British Antarctic Territory and British Indian Ocean Territory, are not represented in London.

Poorer ones — with St Helena in the direst straits — hope a new, all-party dependent territories group will advance their case in Parliament. But there is little prospect that a Labour government will behave differently from the Conservatives: Labour last week rejected suggestions that it would do a deal with Argentina over the Falklands.

Current hope of improvement centres on the Home Office's agreement to consider easing restrictions on 150,000 dependent territory citizens wishing to work, study or do business in Britain. Dependent territory citizenship does not include the right of abode in the mother country.

"All citizens of dependent territories should have full British citizenship," said Sukey Cameron of the Falkland Islands government. "It seems incredible that they don't."

Dependent territory citizens suffer especially from having to obtain visas for foreign travel.

"Obviously it does rankle to some extent, particularly that European Union countries have advantages that members of the family don't have," said Tom Russell of the Cayman Islands government.

"But there's a feeling that, once the numbers decrease after Hong Kong goes, the problem may become more soluble in terms of HMG's point of view."

Half UK fraud 'carried out by West Africans'

Guardian Reporters

WEST African criminals are responsible for almost half of all frauds carried out in the UK, according to a report distributed to chief constables.

The National Criminal Intelligence Service report is understood to estimate that Nigerians and Ghanaians swindle £3.5 billion from British individuals, businesses and the Government, out of annual total frauds totalling £8 billion.

A spokeswoman for the service said last week that the report had been distributed to every chief constable and CID head. West African frauds were a "significant concern" for police forces and governments around the world, she said.

Among the swindles is the "419" fraud, named after the section of the Nigerian penal code dealing with fraud. It involves contacting a business or individual in the UK to ask for help in laundering massive sums of money acquired by illicit means.

The victim is offered a cut, but is asked to provide cash and bank account details up-front to help arrange the transfer. The fraudsters then gain access to the victim's account and remove money. There were 18,000 complaints to police about this kind of approach in 1995, and one victim lost £1.5 million. Another swindle is offering cargo at a discount, with apparently genuine documentation to prove its existence. Payment is demanded up-front, and the cargo turns out not to exist. One man lost £250,000.

Multiple claims for housing and social service benefits have been made, using up to 25 false names and addresses.

Another swindle is to offer supposedly damaged banknotes, defaced with a thick black substance, which can be cleaned off with a special chemical. After a demonstration shows the method works on one banknote, the victim is sold large numbers, which prove to be fakes.

A package of measures to fight the problem is due to be discussed by the economic summit of heads of government in Denver, Colorado in June. The possible measures include imposing tighter visa controls and new attempts to build up an international network of intelligence.

The criminals are said to operate in a number of countries to make it difficult to track them down.

The crime intelligence service held an international conference in London last month to discuss the extent of the problem. Officials preparing the agenda for the G7 summit in Denver also met in Washington to consider ways of tackling the problem. It was the first time an overall picture of the frauds has been put together.

In Brief

LOYALISTS were blamed for a 100lb bomb, left outside a Sinn Fein office in west Belfast. It was defused while John Major visited the city centre a mile away, as part of a 1,000-mile flying visit to the four corners of the United Kingdom in one day.

LABOUR unveiled plans to divert millions of pounds of lottery profits into education and health, pledging to revamp the Tories' flagship scheme as "the people's lottery".

A MAN who went missing from a mental hospital was arrested after he took an early morning stroll around the grounds of Buckingham Palace.

AN ARMED gang held staff hostage at Redhill sorting office in Surrey and escaped with more than £2 million.

THE ANIMAL Liberation Front warned of a "new mood" of militancy among its activists following a fire-bomb attack on a livestock haulage firm, and an anti-vivisection demonstration in Oxfordshire.

THE BRITISH Museum has rejected charges of lax security after it emerged that rare Persian book covers and a 17th century Japanese chest have been stolen in the past year.

ST PAUL'S Cathedral pulled out of a sponsorship deal with a company involved in the arms trade. The dean and chapter of the cathedral said support from Lockheed Martin Tactical Systems (UK) Limited would be refused for "ethical reasons".

THE LAW prohibiting the promotion by local government of homosexuality, known as Section 28, should be repealed because it it is inhibiting teachers from providing pupils with a full range of sex education, the British Medical Association said.

MONKTONHALL Colliery Ltd, Scotland's first co-operative mine, was put into liquidation by Waverley Mining Finance, the company that three years ago rescued the luckless industrial experiment.

LADY SEEAR, one of the Liberal Democrats' most respected peers and a tireless campaigner for equal rights for women, has died at the age of 84.

SIR NICHOLAS BAKER, the former Tory MP for North Devon, has died at the age of 58.

THE SPICE GIRLS almost caused a diplomatic incident when they performed a traditional Maori war dance, the haka, during a tour of Bali. Maori leaders were outraged by the act, which only men are supposed to perform.

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Labour prepares for first 100 days



Andy McSmith

ON MAY 14, John Major and Tony Blair will walk side by side through the stone corridors and high-ceilinged lobbies from the House of Commons to the House of Lords, to hear the Queen read out what MPs call the Gracious Speech.

The public has seen this ritual before, but this time — if the opinion polls are accurate — there will be one small but significant difference: Tony Blair will walk on the right, with John Major at his left. When they return to the Commons, Labour MPs will take their seats on the benches on the right-hand side of the Speaker, where they have not sat since May 1979.

For all the world-weary comments of those who think that a change of government will barely make a difference to political life in Britain, the first 100 or so days of a new Blair administration will be full of novelty, at least for those who watch it closely. They may be surprised by the number of radical measures scheduled to make their way on to the statute book during the dramatic opening months of a Labour administration.

It begins with the ritual of the Queen's Speech, after which Tony Blair will make his first formal speech as Prime Minister, and John Major will reply as Leader of the Opposition. Later, Mr Major will undergo the humiliation of the first Prime Minister's Questions where he is the one doing the asking, and the last word belongs to Mr Blair.

As the summer break approaches, another familiar ritual will be re-enacted. There will be a Budget, but this time it will be Gordon Brown who is photographed holding aloft the red box. After he has finished his address to the Commons, the Leader of the Opposition will reply, but we do not yet know whether that will be John Major or one of the ambitious rivals jostling to succeed him.

Budgets are not normally held in July. This is a one-off "emergency" Budget, around which the Conservatives have been doing their best to whip up alarm. Chancellors never cut taxes immediately after an election, they say, therefore the only point in having a July Budget is to put taxes up. To dramatise the point, Chancellor Kenneth Clarke last week published an ominous-looking list of things Mr Brown might do to the taxpayer, such as abolishing mortgage tax relief, taxing pension funds or abolishing the married person's allowance.

Mr Brown has not made a categorical promise that he is going to leave all personal tax breaks and tax allowances untouched, because a future Chancellor has to leave himself some freedom for manoeuvre, but he and Tony Blair have repeatedly said that they are not in the business of raising general tax levels for people who have already had huge tax hikes since 1992.

The only tax measure directly affecting every household which will certainly be in the Budget is the promised cut in VAT on fuel bills, from its present level of 8 per cent down to the 5 per cent minimum permissible under European law. The other certainty is that the Budget will include the windfall tax which will raise between £3 billion and £10 billion from the privatised electricity, gas and water utilities.

The windfall tax will be used to make an immediate start on driving down the jobless totals, concentrating particularly on the young and the long-term unemployed.

Employers will be offered subsidies in the form of a £75 a week tax rebate for six months for every person they take on who has been registered unemployed for two years or more, or £60 a week for taking on an unemployed under-25 year old.

The young will also get the option of being paid to work in the voluntary sector or with an "environment task force", or to take up full-time study, but one option closed to them will be to go on drawing state benefits: ultimately, the state will use the threat to cut off benefits unless they take one of the jobs on offer.

Top item in the Queen's Speech will put into effect Tony Blair's promise that "education, education, education" will be his government's top priority. Because Labour is committed to a consultation before legislating, the process will start with a government White Paper during the first 100 days, and then a parliamentary bill later in the year.

It will be a blockbuster bill ranging over disparate issues such as student loans and youth training, though its main purpose is to push up teaching standards in schools.

It will give the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, David Blunkett, powers to close state schools if they are seen to be failing, and reopen them under new leadership and a new name, or even to tell local councils that they are not up to the job of running schools, by sending in a task force to take them over. The bill will also begin the phasing out of the assisted places scheme, so that no more children from relatively poor families will be able to enter public schools with their fees paid by the state.

The money saved will be used to make sure that no five- to seven-years-olds are taught in classes of more than 30 pupils per teacher.

Another item which will certainly be in the first Queen's Speech is a Crime and Disorder Bill, which will address one half of Tony Blair's most famous political promise by being very "tough on crime", introducing swifter punishment for young offenders, new powers to deal with anti-social neighbours, a crack down on drink-related crime, a curfew for children under 10 and compulsory drug tests and treatment for addicts. To those who object that it is not "tough on the causes of crime", Labour's answer is that unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, begets more crime than any other social ill, and is being tackled by the Welfare to Work programme.

Devolution for Scotland and Wales will begin almost immediately. Labour has promised that the referendums in Scotland and Wales will be held by the autumn, which means that a bill will have to be put through parliament before July.

However, some of the biggest items on Mr Blair's agenda do not arise from his election promises, but would be there awaiting any elected head of state.

THE PRIME Minister faces a heavy schedule in mid-June, when he will be off to Denver for a summit of the heads of government of the world's seven richest countries. That week will begin with the Amsterdam summit of the 12 heads of European Union governments. It is for this occasion the Tories claim that Britain desperately needs John Major, the experienced negotiator, and will suffer if represented by Tony Blair because the summit will deal with a range of proposed reforms of the EU bureaucracy, to prepare for the possible admission of new members from eastern Europe.

To make the enlarged EU more manageable, the Brussels commissioners are proposing to ease up the rules on issues such as immigration and foreign policy. The Tories see this as a huge threat to the sovereignty of the British parliament and say that Mr Blair will cave in too easily. Whether he will really be such a pushover remains to be seen.

One of the most sensitive issues to face the incoming Prime Minister during his first 100 days is the unfinished business of Sir Gordon Downey's investigation into the cash-for-questions affair.

Sir Gordon has completed his inquiries, but cannot act because he has to report to the Select Committee on Standards and Privileges, which will not sit again until after the election. Once the new parliament is functioning, the public will very soon know whether the 10 Tories still under investigation have been cleared or not.

At least two of the 10 will no longer be MPs, having retired from the Commons, but eight are running for re-election, including Neil Hamilton, who is defending his Tatton seat against anti-sleaze candidate Martin Bell. If newly returned MPs have been heavily criticised for accepting money or gifts, there is the possibility that they will be put through a parliamentary trial of a kind not seen since 1991, when the former Tory MP John Browne was suspended from the Commons for three months for failing to declare some of his business interests.

It is even possible that an MP will be expelled from the Commons, for the first time since the forties, possibly forcing an early byelection.

Polls apart over false memory syndrome

John Curtice

RARELY has the old standby headline "Polls apart" been more appropriate than last week when a Guardian/ICM poll saw the Labour lead shrink to five points on the same day that a Daily Telegraph/Gallup poll showed Labour increase its lead by five points to 21 per cent.

For an industry hoping to reclaim public confidence after the disaster of 1992, the divergent results were a severe embarrassment. In the wake of the 1992 disaster, when even the company that was nearest to the real result underestimated John Major's lead by as much as 7 points, the opinion poll industry has undergone a revolution. But it is only half finished.

In 1992 there was largely a consensus about how opinion polls should be conducted. First, all polls were conducted face to face rather than by telephone. Second, those who said they did not know how they would vote or were undecided could be ignored. Third, people were selected for interview using the so-called quota method. Finally, no one took any notice of how people said they voted at the previous election.

That consensus has gone. Every company has made at least one significant change to overcome the problems of 1992, and they have all made different ones.

Unsurprisingly, when pollsters ask people how they intend to vote, not everyone gives an answer. Some say they "don't know"; others simply refuse to declare their intentions at all. Traditionally what pollsters did was to assume these respondents would behave in exactly the same way as those who did say what they would do. In 1992 this assumption came unstuck; the "don't knows" and "won't says" were more likely to vote Conservative.

This time around most of the companies are trying to estimate how the "don't knows" and "won't says" will behave. But one, Mori, is not, And among those that are, no two companies are using the same method. The companies do, however, agree that there are once again more "shy Tories" than supporters of the other parties.

It is even more crucial that those who are interviewed should be representative of Britain in the first place. The second thing wrong in 1992 was that this was not clearly the case.

Under the method of quota sampling used by all the pollsters, interviewers were told to work in a particular area and then to interview a given number of voters of various kinds, such as so many men, so many women etc. But thereafter the interviewer was free to choose whom to interview.

For the method to work the quotas have to be accurate. But in 1992 the polls aimed for samples that were too downmarket, thereby introducing a pro-Labour bias.

Two companies, Gallup and ICM, have partly or wholly abandoned quota sampling. They have switched instead towards so-called random sampling. At the same time they have also changed from interviewing people face to face in their own homes or in the street to doing so on the telephone.

Random sampling is the statistician's favourite tool. Using the telephone makes it possible to go back again to people who were out when they were first called — and there is evidence to suggest that those who are more difficult to contact are more likely to be Conservatives.

Two companies, ICM and NOP, have decided that these changes are not enough. They also look at how people say they voted at the last election and adjust their polls to ensure that they have the correct proportions of Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat supporters last time around as well.

But unfortunately people do not always remember accurately how they voted last time. Some mistakenly claim to have voted in the way they say they would vote now.

Given these differences, what has been remarkable about the polls until last week was the agreement between them. Labour's average lead in four out of the five companies' polls ranges from 20 to 22 points. Only ICM has consistently been different.

Whatever the results of May 1, the whole industry looks as though it still has more to learn about what makes a good or a bad poll.

All the Guardian and Observer election coverage and more can be found on the Election Website: http://election.guardian.co.uk

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Hugo Young on John Major who finally accepted he was the establishment but never quite lost his deep insecurity

No vision thing

WAITING for the end, John Major seems more puzzled than enraged. He shows none of the neurotic anxiety normally diagnosed in prime ministers on the brink of involuntary departure. When somebody has to accuse his chief opponent of being a despicable liar, it is not Major who frames the words. Though he despises Tony Blair's campaign, he merely calls him scurrilous, before embarking on numerous explanations, as patient as they are bemused, of the complexities of the Tories' plan for pensions reform.

For six weeks, he has been doing what he enjoys, getting away from the centre of power, and he is good at it. "It is a very artificial life, the centre of politics," he said recently. "It is not real, and you are subjected to all sorts of artificial influences."

Campaigning is what he likes, working the rooms, haranguing the meetings, pressing the flesh of his personality on ordinary people who are always surprised to find how much more winning it is than the televised simulacrum.

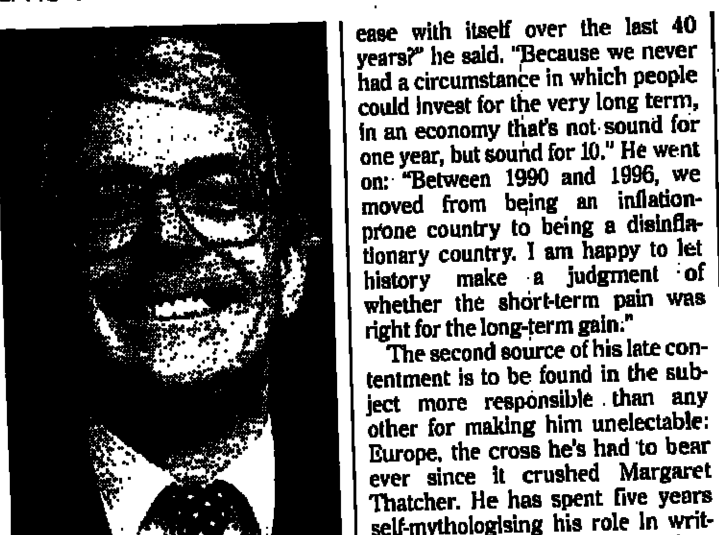
At press conferences, too, his persona has expanded. We forget that Blair is not the first quick smiler. There was a time when, just like Blair, the smile that said ingratiatingly little was Major's dominant mode. Now he is more sternly, yet equably, in command. He's the orchestrator of his own campaign: composer, conductor and most of the wind section, if not the brass.

He gives every sign, in short, of being a secure politician. Terminal adversity finds him exhibiting more nerveless aplomb than he has shown before. Never has he displayed more dominance than at the moment before his authority is finally blown apart.

Insecurity has been a thread of most of his premiership. Quite a lot of it was personal, having something to do with his unprivileged origins and his lack of education. It took a long time for him to surmount the chippiness of the outsider, privately fuming against the presumptions of the establishment.

His staff did not find it easy to make him see things straight. One said: "I'd tell him 'Prime Minister, you are now the personification of the establishment and you have to accept that' . . . He did eventually get the point." The insecurity that existed at a deeper level — a doubt about his political vision — has never entirely disappeared.

I have a note from a 1994 talk with one of his allies turned enemies, who remarked: "Major is certainly very intelligent, but he is a person without a core and I think he knows it." That's not just spite from the *salon des refusés*. A genuine friend said, around the same time: "Where's the vision thing, where's the gut instinct about the right way of going? It's curious to get to the top and find it so difficult to express why you're there, or what you want to do having got there."


Major: finally a secure politician

For the most part, Major's security of vision has been strictly post facto, and he has failed to make it tell. It is, however, the seedbed of the belief that keeps him sane. Its two parts have inspired neither the voters not the party, but have done the trick for the man himself.

The first part is the economy, of which he is invincibly proud. It is what makes him summon up the phrase, absurd in its unreality, which he made his ambition when he came in: "a nation at ease with itself".

"Why has this nation not been at ease with itself over the last 40 years?" he said. "Because we never had a circumstance in which people could invest for the very long term, in an economy that's not sound for one year, but sound for 10." He went on: "Between 1990 and 1996, we moved from being an inflation-prone country to being a disinflationary country. I am happy to let history make a judgment of whether the short-term pain was right for the long-term gain."

The second source of his late contentment is to be found in the subject more responsible than any other for making him unelectable: Europe, the cross he's had to bear ever since it crushed Margaret Thatcher. He has spent five years self-mythologising his role in writing the Maastricht treaty. His talent as a negotiator is one he will talk about at the smallest provocation, but especially in face of the possibility that Tony Blair may be called upon to do even half as well at Amsterdam. He appears immune to any perception that for some time no European statesman has been listening to a word he says: another source of his unreal self-satisfaction.

These, then, are Major's inner fortifications against the hand of fate. He has also grown a lot less touchy than he was. One of his most senior former colleagues said a few months ago: "He's much more philosophical than he used to be. He talks about what history will make of it all, in a way he certainly wouldn't have done earlier. There's been an improvement, but in the direction of pessimism. He's more serene, but more pessimistic. More serene *because* more pessimistic."

In his new controlling mode, insecurity banished, Major wrenched the Tory campaign in a direction neither he, nor the collective on which he originally relied, intended at the beginning. It was his decision to make Europe the central issue for the Tories, to the perverse neglect of the economy that was always their best case. It symbolises the hubris that's gone with the serenity: for Europe personifies the leader and defies the party.

That the normal compact of democracies — make us richer, and we will send you back to power — has broken down is distressing but not life-threatening. Two facets of current politics explain this.

The first is psychological. In the end, Major can say he's done the top job. It would be false to deem him blameless for it ending in disaster, though easy for him to think otherwise, and find relief in an early shedding of responsibility for the existence, speaking for Britain, of rabidly anti-European Conservative MPs like Teresa Gorman.

"There are plenty of other things I want to do," he once said. "I certainly don't intend to stay in politics until I drop, like Ted [Heath]."

The second consolation stands against all that has been said for the past six weeks. He is the accessory before the fact of New Labour. If he hadn't won the 1992 election, New Labour would not have happened and nor, yet, would Tony Blair.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
May 4 1997

Brutal end to the Lima siege

THE OPERATION against the Tupac Amaru guerrillas in the Peruvian capital, Lima, has been a success in its own terms. Such crises generate their own extreme logic: "revolutionary violence", as the hostage-takers must have more than half-expected, has led to a counter-revolutionary response. The hostages and their families are overjoyed; public opinion is relieved and President Alberto Fujimori is flushed with pride. But that is not the end of the story.

The circumstances of these incidents leave difficult questions to answer. Did Mr Fujimori, who had always favoured an armed outcome, frustrate a peaceful solution? Perhaps there was still a faint chance, yet the intermediaries in the negotiations believed that positions had hardened rather than weakened. Neither side acknowledged a culture of compromise, which might have avoided the final bloodshed. Could the lives of some of the rebels have been saved, whether or not — as is claimed by a guerrilla outside the embassy — four of them actually attempted to surrender? In theory the government could have tried to spare them: strategic reasoning in a knife-edge operation meant that no one was given a chance. We can feel distaste at these aspects, but once the operation had been launched they were a brutally inescapable part of it.

The Tupac Amaru and their sympathisers need to ask themselves some hard questions too. They acted as a vanguard in the unhappy tradition of the revolutionary "foco" which was championed — fatally in his own case — by Che Guevara. Even allowing for a uniformly hostile Peruvian press, they do not seem to have gained a significant measure of popular support. Internal splits weakened the appeal of a group without a clearly defined ideology, and occasional acts of terrorism blurred their difference from the more ruthless Sendero Luminoso.

None of this diminishes the strength of the guerrillas' case in drawing attention to the inhuman conditions suffered by those in prison — including many entirely innocent of terrorist conduct who have been sentenced by military tribunals with hooded judges. Human Rights Watch speaks of up to 1,000 people sentenced to decades of imprisonment in life-threatening conditions — a situation tacitly admitted by the government, whose special review panel has now overturned some convictions. This can indeed be described as terrorism by the state. Nor does Mr Fujimori have a satisfactory answer to the banner denouncing poverty that the guerrillas hung over the Japanese embassy in Lima. With nearly half the population below the line, and one-fifth not able to eat properly, it is not enough to rely on "trickle-down" policies or hopeful talk of the Peruvian economy matching that of neighbouring Chile. Long after the memory of the embassy siege fades, the misery of the unremembered millions will continue.

New twist to the power triangle

WHEN THE presidents of Russia and China stood side by side last week in the Kremlin, they evoked for a moment the vision of a long-lost Sino-Soviet entente. Boris Yeltsin and Jiang Zemin are not Joseph Stalin and Chairman Mao Zedong: it is now an equal and much looser relationship, in which a more stable China may even have the advantage. Yet there is talk of a "new international order" implicitly directed against what Mr Yeltsin calls the "uni-polar order" towards which "someone" (ie, Bill Clinton) is seeking to pull the world. This sense of tug and tussle between the world's three largest countries is very familiar from the past.

Half a century ago, Washington, Beijing and Moscow became the corners of a post-war triangle of power that has since seen some surprising permutations. The sworn friendship between Moscow and Beijing degenerated first to polemics and then to the brink of war, while the United States and the Soviet Union experimented with peaceful coexistence, leaving China totally isolated. But then the US tipped the balance the other way when Richard Nixon enlisted Mao Zedong's aid to isolate Leonid Brezhnev. Throughout most of the 1980s, China continued to insist that the Soviet superpower was a bigger menace to the world than its old enemy the US — while embracing many features of capitalist economics. Ideology in the end was no match for material interest and strategic expediency.

Now with the collapse of the Soviet Union the wheel has spun again even if it has not come full circle. Last week Mr Yeltsin spoke about US unipolar ambitions in terms very similar to China's complaint about Washington's hegemonism. The Russian leader is perhaps keener than Mr Jiang to invest with geo-political significance the new understanding with China. He spoke of a day of historic importance for the 21st century, hinting at a new alignment against encroaching Nato power from the West.

The Chinese are more cautious: Mr Jiang told the Duma that their relationship "has no other meaning than bilateral co-operation and friendship". His foreign minister put it in an unusually honest historical context: "We have tried alliance [between Russia and China] and we have tried confrontation. Both did not work and now we must find something else." The common border remains an ambiguous element in the relationship. There is a shared interest in reducing troop numbers on both sides, yet the physical contiguity of two large powers will always retain a potential for conflict. Perhaps the most important argument against too close a Moscow-Beijing relationship is the hard reality of the global market. Neither country can retreat behind a new defensive wall against Western economic power — and neither really wants to.

The temptation still exists to construct a more solid axis, and it will be exacerbated to the extent that the US appears over-confident of its own superior strength. Mr Jiang himself spoke before arriving in Moscow of a "strategic partnership" for the next century. China now accounts for at least a third of all Russian arms sales, and both countries have a common interest in keeping the Central Asian republics in place. Yet in the shifting triangle of US-China-Russia relations, only one thing can be sure: it is bound to change again.

Jiggery-pokery in Jakarta

THEY MANAGE these things much better in Indonesia, where there has never been a whisper of uncertainty as to who will win in this month's legislative elections. Last Sunday's official start will see an unequal campaign between the only three parties licensed to take part. Golkar, the army-backed ruling party, has won every election since 1971. There are no prizes for guessing who will win again on May 29.

The candidates of the other two parties — the Muslim-oriented United Development Party (UDP) and the Christian-Nationalist Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) — have all been screened by military intelligence. There are severe restrictions on street rallies, posters and leaflets. A complicated zoning system means that on each campaigning day, each party may only campaign in two designated zones. All political broadcasts have to be approved by the information minister, Harmoko, who happens to chair Golkar.

The Indonesian election campaign does have two interesting features. The first might be called "the battle of the daughters" — except that only one daughter is allowed to take part. President Suharto's eldest daughter, Siti Hardyanti "Tutut" Rukmana, kicked off the campaign with a stern demand for "orderly" behaviour. Tutut is one of Suharto's rapacious offspring — politely known as a "prominent businesswoman". The other daughter is Megawati Sukarnoputri, whose father President Sukarno was ousted by Suharto in 1967. Last year a government-inspired party coup deprived her of leadership of the PDI. All her supporters have been denied permission to take part in the election.

The other issue is the size of Golkar's majority. The ruling party has already set a target of 70.02 per cent compared with 68 per cent in the last election. This might seem to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Yet the removal of Megawati has raised the possibility of large-scale abstention. Tutut was sufficiently concerned last week to appeal to the audience not to join a spoil-vote campaign. A slump in the Golkar vote would be a small beginning towards the far-off goal of real democracy for Indonesia and the end of the Suharto family regime.

Why press freedom is no laughing matter

Roy Greenslade

JOURNALISTS are held in low esteem in Britain. Newspapers are products. Editorial content is reduced to a commodity in a market-driven world. When editors decide what to publish they think of sales, not souls: their first concern is to boost the readership, not to bring about a wholesale transformation of society.

This is in the nature of a mature representative democracy. In a free society the largest battles are deemed to have been won. Most Britons take press freedom for granted, forgetting that people in the past were jailed for publishing in the face of official hostility. Editors in Britain may be under constant threat of losing their jobs. But in too many countries, editors are under constant threat of losing their liberty, and even their lives. Journalists, editors and publishers are murdered, assaulted, detained and harassed for trying to tell the truth.

In the past 10 years more than 500 journalists have been killed on duty. An estimated 1,800 attacks on the press, in 160 countries, were recorded last year. There are 180 journalists currently in prison, in 22 countries, for attempting to do nothing more than exercise press freedom.

China, which is two months away from assuming control of Hong Kong, has 16 journalists in jail, many serving long sentences for "disseminating counter-revolutionary propaganda". Ethiopia has 18, most of whom fell foul of a law that bars the expression of "feelings of hostility, hatred, or contempt toward the government". Kuwait holds 15, all of whom were found guilty of working for the Iraqi occupation paper during the Gulf war. Most of them were tortured during their interrogations before trials that lawyers condemned for their unfairness. Their collective defence — that they were coerced into working for the invaders — has never been rebutted, but it was ignored by the judges.

Nigeria has eight journalists in prison. Four of them are serving 15 years for what they have written. One of them, Kunle Ajibade, has already spent two years in jail for refusing to reveal the source of a story about a *coup d'état*. Burma also has eight, held on a variety of charges that apparently bring the government into disrepute.

But the country with the worst record by far is Turkey. It has 78 reporters, writers, editors and publishers in its jails. Most of the men and women held worked for leftist or pro-Kurdish papers and magazines. But they are behind bars for nothing more than what they wrote. When I asked the Turkish embassy about the reasons for this wholesale denial of press freedom I was asked to fax questions to Ankara. A week later, at the time of going to press, no reply had been received.

Turkey is eager to join the European Union yet it is clearly in breach of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. This states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authorities and regardless of frontiers." It is to bolster such freedom, and to draw attention to the plight of journalists facing daily harassment, that May 3 has been declared World Press Freedom Day. It exists to recognise the sacrifices made in the struggle for press freedom. But there is a practical reason too: to put pressure on all those governments that continue to deny their citizens the basic human right to know.

In the words of the World Association of Newspapers, a Paris-based organisation representing more than 15,000 publications from around the world: "Our May 3 message is that journalists everywhere must be granted the right to report freely and without fear." Support for this initiative comes from Index on Censorship magazine, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this month. It is dedicated to freeing us all from the censor, exposing the crushing of freedoms, fighting threats to free speech and publishing the work of the censored.

A recent issue, devoted to events in China, revealed eight new regulations which prohibit the media from reporting anything that might damage the image of the government or supposedly affect the stability of the country.

Number one says: "In order to guarantee unity of thinking and to avoid a negative impact on political stability, all sensitive issues, such as the campaign to protect the Daiyou Islands or the overseas democracy movement, are not to be covered." Number three is a gem: "There have been over 10,000 cases of demonstration and protest in the urban and rural areas within this past year. All of these are not to be covered."

THE PENALTIES for disobeying this heavy-handed censorship are well known. Gao Yu was tried without counsel in November 1994 and sentenced to six years in prison for "leaking state secrets" about China's structural reforms in articles for the Hong Kong magazine Mirror Monthly. She had previously been jailed for 14 months following the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations, and released early after showing symptoms of a heart condition. Pedro Ramirez, editor of Spain's El Mundo, rightly points out that Gao Yu is a courageous woman who deserves help and support.

It is also a reminder that the work to maintain and extend freedoms never stops. "Freedom of expression is not self-perpetuating, but has to be maintained by constant vigilance," says Ursula Owen, Index's editor and chief executive.

She is absolutely right. But in case anyone should imagine that we in Britain are all right Jack, remember that press freedom is a relative term. We are denied information in Britain. We are routinely lied to when we seek it. There is no right to know in this bastion of democracy.

Imagine a country in which journalists face all that, plus the knowledge that if they penetrate the veil of secrecy they face judicial murder, torture and unlimited prison sentences. And they do so not for money, not to maximise the sales of their paper, but to tell their fellow citizens the truth. World Press Freedom Day is no joke.

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Le Monde

Jacques Chirac's calculated risk

COMMENT
Jean-Marie Colombani

WHO is allowed to dissolve the French National Assembly? The president of the republic. When? More or less any time. On what grounds? Any that he chooses. That is how an eminent expert on constitutional matters sums up Article 12 of the constitution, cited by President Jacques Chirac when he went on television on April 21 to call a snap general election at the end of May.

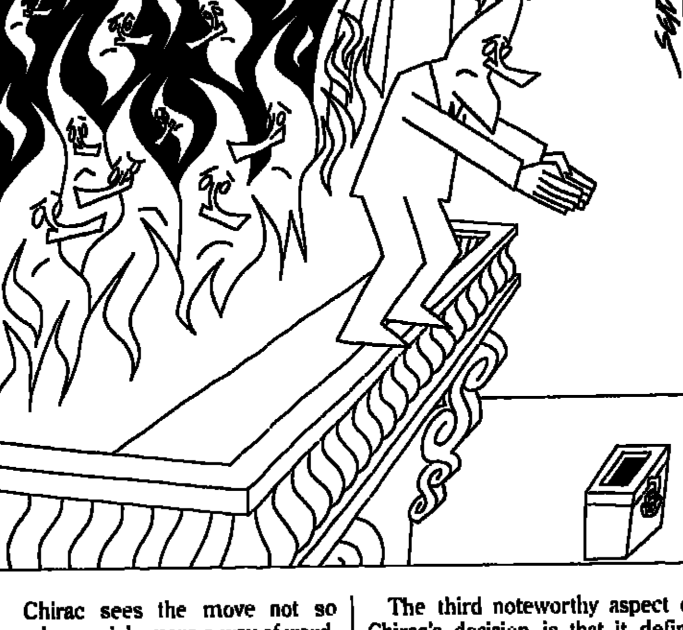
We can now see our institutions for what they are: they are designed to protect a single person; they have erected an impregnable fortress around him; and they can function exactly as he wants them to.

This is the first time a president has used his right to dissolve parliament for purely personal purposes. There is no political or national crisis. It is just a matter of the president's "convenience", to use his own words. It also happens to be a solution he had "naturally" ruled out just a few months ago, when he explained to the nation that he would resign himself to such a course only in a crisis.

His supporters can argue that the calling of an election when the time is right means only that the president is acting like any British prime minister. An even stronger argument is that, by a coincidence of electoral timetables, the parliamentary term due to start after the general election will end at the same time as the president's own term of office (in 2002). In other words, the next president will be elected within weeks of a new parliament coming in.

Normally, this would result in the regime becoming more presidential. But under the French system, where too much power is invested in the president, Chirac's decision looks more like the final stage in the "monarchisation" of our institutions.

Those institutions are being used for nakedly partisan purposes. Chirac's decision is a political move that sets out to preserve his own absolute power and the influence of his supporters in the neo-Gaullist Rassemblement de la République party (RPR). It also aims to produce a presidential majority.



Chirac sees the move not so much as a risk, more a way of warding off the threat of defeat at the polls one year from now, when the government's term of office was originally due to end. The period between now and then would indeed have been fraught with danger — that the outgoing majority might implode, that unemployment might rise further, that political sleaze would refuse to go away, and that election issues would become blurred by the concurrent debate over a single European currency.

Chirac calculates that the election will enable him to see the back of a massive but ill-disciplined majority and get instead a smaller but more united majority. What matters to him is control of his troops more than their numbers. The majority that he hopes will be returned on June 1 will owe him total allegiance.

The only risk Chirac is taking, if risk it is, is the possibility that voters will register their dissatisfaction with the prime minister and his government. Everything is therefore being done to prevent the public mood from changing between now and the election. That is why Chirac made sure the campaign period was kept to a minimum, almost as if he intended to catch the electorate off guard.

The third noteworthy aspect of Chirac's decision is that it definitively puts paid to the ambiguity surrounding several planks of his 1995 presidential campaign. He can no longer rely on the magic recipe that enabled him, during that campaign, to rope into the same fold such political opposites as the ultra-neoliberal Alain Madelin and the almost leftwing Gaullist Philippe Séguin — a recipe symbolised by his laudable campaign promise to end the "social fracture".

There could be no better indication that Chirac has returned to the right of the political spectrum than the fact that in dissolving parliament he snuffed out a parliamentary debate on the so-called "social cohesion" bill.

Now he is back at that end of the spectrum, he has two options — to follow a social neoliberal policy of the kind favoured by Chancellor Helmut Kohl, or a radical neoliberal policy in the Thatcherite mould.

For campaign reasons, the prime minister, Alain Juppé, has tried to reassure public opinion by not plumping for either of those two options. It is uncertain, too, whether France is about to undergo a new phase of belt-tightening, which would be the logical upshot of the "continuity" advocated by Juppé.

Any such belt-tightening would simply be the price the nation will have to pay for the repeated failures that have marked the government's two years in office.

Since Chirac came to power, what we have seen is not the promised fight against social fracture, but an ever-widening political fracture between government and public opinion.

Any hopes that politicians might be seen to be acting with greater moral probity were dashed the moment that magistrates exposed the sleaze surrounding the RPR and its Paris networking system.

Chirac's campaign promises had become no more than a distant memory by December 1995, when Juppé's plans to reform the social security system — which, as it turns out, have done nothing to reduce its yawning deficit — ran into massive public opposition.

The government's introduction of an umpteenth set of measures to deal with immigration showed it was persisting in a mistake made by both leftwing and rightwing governments in the past: that of turning the question of foreigners into a core issue.

Although Chirac has taken only a small risk in going to the polls, voters may be tempted to use the voting booth to censure his record. The left will be able to exploit his television performance this week: his failure to give his decision the proper window-dressing — by, for example, dramatising the situation — meant everyone could see it for what it was: a political manoeuvre.

The Socialist leader, Lionel Jospin, visibly delighted to step into the ring at last instead of having to spend all his time making policy declarations to gatherings of Socialists, is in with a chance, if not of winning the election, then at least of giving the left the kind of parliamentary representation that would better reflect its influence in society.

The electorate will be asked to give a second chance to a team that has failed to govern convincingly for two years. With so much remaining to be done, it would surely be illogical to strengthen a party that already has so much power concentrated in its hands — always assuming, of course, that an anti-government vote benefits the democratic opposition and not the National Front, which Chirac has rightly described as "the party of hatred".

(April 23)

Limited success for UN human rights body

Isabelle Vichniac in Geneva

THE UN Human Rights Commission hearings, held from March 10 to April 18 in Geneva, and attended by 53 countries and numerous NGOs, can hardly be counted a total success. There was bitter disappointment in some quarters at the commission's failure to condemn China, where torture is systematically used and where executions rose to 3,500 last year.

France was accused of breaching European solidarity on human rights issues by refusing to support any condemnation of Beijing. It was also criticised for its stance on Chad. Human rights bodies denounced the Chadian government for allowing rape and torture to become widespread and for issuing the following instructions to police on November 14: "No thief should be the subject of any legal procedure. When caught red-handed, proceed immediately to eliminate him physically."

Although Amnesty International's evidence was damning, the Chad question was examined in camera — which meant that, thanks to the protection of major players such as France, the Chadian government was spared any public condemnation. Massacres and atrocities in Algeria were also passed over in silence.

Israel was less fortunate. However, Nabil Ramlavi, the head of the PLO delegation, said the Egyptian paper Al-Ahram had alleged that Israel had injected 300 Palestinian children with the Aids virus. The charge was categorically denied by Al-Ahram on its front page.

Iran was invited to halt all discrimination against women, to stop committing acts of violence against members of the Iranian opposition abroad, to give assurances that it did not support death threats against Salman Rushdie, and to ensure the death penalty was not applied to those found guilty of apostasy. A resolution along those lines was passed by 26 votes to seven, with 19 abstentions.

No one, on the other hand, voted against a motion condemning the Iraqi government for massive and serious violations of human rights and international law, though 22 countries abstained.

A resolution stressing the commission's "concern" over persistent human rights violations in East Timor — including torture, arbitrary detention and "disappearances" — was passed by 20 votes to 14, with 18 abstentions, even though the Nobel Peace Prize winner, José Ramos Horta, had been prevented from addressing the commission in person.

Cuba, which no longer enjoys the protection of its ex-Soviet ally, was condemned by a resolution calling on it, among other things, to free political prisoners and authorise political parties.

A resolution condemning extra-judicial executions, disappearances, the use of weapons (in particular anti-personnel mines) against the civilian population, and the violation of women's and children's rights in Sudan was passed without a vote.

At the end of proceedings, the commission said it would ask the UN General Assembly to organise a world conference on racism, xenophobia and intolerance in 2001 — or later.

(April 23)

Theft taints Paris police still further

THE French police's code of ethics, in force for the past 11 years, requests police personnel to observe the Declaration of Human Rights of 1789, which stipulates, in Article 12, that the police force "is set up for the benefit of all, and not in the specific interest of those responsible for it".

This republican principle has clearly been flouted by an unprecedented new development in the Elf-Aquitaine scandal — the theft from police hands of a box of documents seized by examining magistrate Eva Joly in the course of her investigations into the affair.

Some will see the theft as just another grotesque episode in a case which, with its ramifications in Africa, Venezuela and Swiss banks, now has all the characteristics of a second-rate B-movie.

Yet the disappearance of the box, to which official seals had been affixed, from the headquarters of the Paris police's fraud squad, is an extremely serious matter.

The missing documents, which relate to secret commissions paid into a Swiss bank account by Elf's fixer, André Tarallo, otherwise known as "Mr Africa", might have enabled Joly to throw light on the political sleaze that has tainted relations between France and several African countries.

For several months now, the Elf scandal has been an affair of state involving parallel diplomacy, political funding and corruption. Some of its ramifications would seem to extend up to the "first circle" of the neo-Gaullist movement.

The theft of the documents, like the mysterious "visit" paid to the computers of certain fraud squad investigators, has cast a pall of suspicion over the Paris police force and the culture existing within it.

Run in the eighties and early nineties by professional policemen who resisted political pressure and respected procedural rules, the force is now headed by Olivier Foll, who has close ties with the Paris city council, who worked as an adviser to Edouard Balladur when he was prime minister, and who has never made any secret of his neo-Gaullist sympathies.

Although Foll was called to order by the Court of Appeal for having refused to assist the investigating magistrate, Eric Halphen, when he wanted to search the home of the mayor of Paris, Jean Tiberi, he was kept on in his job.

Foll now finds himself once again deeply implicated in suspicious manoeuvres that reflect the way the police force — riven as it is by squabbling between rival clans — has become increasingly, and dangerously, partisan. He must surely be held responsible for this state of affairs.

(April 24)

The other Giacometti

Alberto's fame eclipsed his father's talents. A new exhibition aims to put things right, writes **Philippe Dagen**

SUCH was Alberto Giacometti's fame as an artist that it is often forgotten that his father, Giovanni, was a prominent painter in his own right. The latter is the subject of a comprehensive retrospective — his first — at the Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts in Lausanne.

Giovanni Giacometti (1868-1933) came from Stampa, a village in Val Bregaglia, a valley in southeastern Switzerland, where his parents ran a hotel. In 1900, he married Annetta Stampa, the eldest daughter of the village schoolteacher. They had four children — Alberto, Diego, Ottilia and Bruno.

Photographs show the Giacometti family sitting on the grass. Alberto and Diego, who was later to become an interior decorator and bronzesmith, can be recognised from their curly manes, inherited from their father, who was proud of his head of hair and ginger beard, as can be seen from his self-portraits.

Giovanni Giacometti was one of the most prolific, energetic and well-known painters working in Switzerland at the turn of the century. He was also an artist of considerable talent, even if he felt slightly overshadowed by his more famous son.

Biographers of Alberto mention Giovanni only in passing. They give him credit for having given his son brushes and tubes of paint when he was still a child, and that is about all.

In the twenties, Giovanni and Alberto worked together on the same alpine motifs and still-life subjects. They sat for each other in their studio — the son for countless paintings and drawings, and the father for a few oils and sculptures, which he incorporated into his own pictures.

In other words, there was a constant two-way traffic of ideas between the two artists. So it is only right and proper that the retrospective should conclude with a room where works by father and son are shown side by side.

It is impossible not to draw comparisons. In about 1930, Alberto was using compact, heavy brushstrokes while Giovanni was painting in a broad, sweeping, lyrical style. He produced bravura effects with an exuberance that verged on exhibitionism, while his son eschewed such stylistic effects and was more interested in simplicity and refinement. It was probably also a way for Alberto to escape the influence of his father's aesthetic ideas.

Yet it would be wrong to read Oedipal elements into their relationship. It would be a mistake, too, to see the whole exhibition solely in terms of its final room. For in the earlier part of the show Giovanni emerges as an artist of tireless energy and great independence of mind.

The notion of renunciation was meaningless to him. He loathed routine. He wanted to find out, understand and see for himself, to experiment and attempt the impossible. Sometimes he got it wrong, but he went all the way and refused to compromise.

In the 1890s, after a conventional artistic training, Giovanni Giacometti opted for a light palette, Impressionist techniques and the open air. He modelled himself on the Italian painter, Giovanni Segantini, whose international career was cut short by his death in 1899.

A close friend of Giacometti's was a fellow Swiss artist, Cuno Amiet, who had got to know Paul Gauguin's disciples in the small Breton town of Pont-Aven in 1892. Giacometti spent some time in the company of Segantini and Amiet, painting with them in Val Bregaglia and the Engadine.



Giovanni Giacometti's Diego and Ottilia (1909)

He produced large-scale mountain landscapes full of light effects. He was not afraid to take risks, such as giving the snow bluish glints or sticking a bright blue sky above yellow and reddish fields.

HIS 1899 Autoportrait Devant Un Paysage Hivernal (Self-portrait Before A Winter Landscape) is a convincing work. It shows a young man with purplish lips and a wide-eyed, rather fierce expression standing in the centre foreground of the picture. Behind him there are chalets and snow-covered mountains. He is wearing a bonnet that gives him a vaguely medieval air. He asserts his presence. He is someone who has told himself he is going to allow himself every licence and take on every challenge, even at the risk of seeming ridiculous.

Giacometti sometimes took that liberty to extremes. He accepted bread-and-butter commissions, such as decorative paintings for the mansions of the rich. In them he shamelessly vaunted the beauty of Swiss cantons: the firs are tall and green, the meadows extremely verdant and carpeted with flowers, the mountain peaks imposing, and the sky immaculate.

This is the kind of down-market Impressionism found in the panoramic views that used to decorate railway stations and attract tourists to resorts like Evian, Megève and Luchon. But the commissions helped Giacometti to improve his financial situation and brought him a following among the art-loving public.

They also enabled him to carry out some experiments of a more interesting nature. In the early 1900s, he practised Gauguin-like flat, pure tones, Divisionism, colours almost worthy of Matisse, and draughtsmanship reduced to its essentials. But he was not moving in any particular direction — everything depended on what motif he was painting.

On each occasion he pushed experimentation as far as it would go. Divisionism encouraged him to dissolve forms and aim for harmonies of two or three very similar colours, such as pink, violet and orange. In portraits where he uses that technique, all that remains of the sitter is an outline consumed by colour.

Giacometti explored a Gauguinesque vein with equal enthusiasm in and around the village of Stampa, discovering typically Breton scenes with white cows and pretty mottled rocks.

In about 1906, he went even further and started painting in streaks, stripes and blobs. And after reading Vincent Van Gogh's letters he copied the composition of that artist's Pont de Langlois, giving his own painting a more vivid lemon-yellow and delicate pink than the original.

At that time, few people had yet recognised the true worth of Van Gogh, apart from avant-garde movements in Paris and Germany and artists such as André Derain, Maurice Vlaminck and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, who apparently had little in common with Giacometti.

Right until the end of his life, when he started exchanging ideas with his son, Giacometti made no concessions. While continuing to turn out amiable portraits and pleasantly decorative views of gardens and lakes with his customary skill, he continued to depart from the norm, secretly flirting with Fauvism and hovering on the fringes of Expressionism. He did not want to be sanctified during his lifetime as Switzerland's official painter and national hero.

Pictures that step out of line in this way include La Lampe (a 1912 family portrait) and St Moritz (1916). They are the work of a free mind that was trying to fend off success and approaching middle age. If there was one lesson Alberto learnt from his father it was the need to remain unswervingly independent, an ideal to which he remained true throughout his life.

Giovanni Giacometti, Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne, Switzerland. Closed Monday. Until June 1

(April 1)

Ozawa decides to get it together his way

Renaud Machart in Matsumoto

ONE way of getting an orchestra together for a concert is to phone musicians who belong to established orchestras to see if they are free. It is a system much used by conductors of early music.

Youth orchestras, which also use the system extensively, have shown that a few weeks of enthusiastic musical interaction can very often generate a higher degree of performance quality than years of working together day in day out.

There is little doubt that the traditional orchestra, licked into shape by a single conductor, is gradually becoming a thing of the past. The shortcomings of such ensembles are becoming increasingly obvious, except in cases where they specialise in performing new works, or else approach the existing repertoire in the light of modern musicology.

There remain, of course, a few peerless bastions of quality such as the Vienna Philharmonic, the Berlin Philharmonic, the Concertgebouw and some of the so-called "Big Five" in the United States. But even they have now become more outward-looking, inviting guest conductors such as Frans Brüggen, John Eliot Gardiner and Philippe Herreweghe.

Seiji Ozawa, who does not, like them, specialise in the early or classical repertoire (though he has just decided to record Bach's St Matthew Passion), is a conductor who has worked with all the greatest orchestras. He, too, recently decided to change his approach.



Ozawa: changed his approach

Every year, he musters a "session orchestra" for the Saito Kinen Festival in the Japanese town of Matsumoto, at the foot of mountains a few hours out of Tokyo. He manages to put together an orchestra of exemplary artistic calibre, which includes the finest Japanese string players, as well as woodwind and brass soloists from leading orchestras in Europe and the United States.

Players in the Saito Kinen Orchestra include Karl Leister, for a long time clarinet soloist with the Berlin Philharmonic, Everett Firth, virtuoso timpanist with the Boston Symphony, and Shinegori Kudo, an inspired flautist who teaches at the Paris Ecole Normale de Musique.

The result is extraordinarily homogeneous and coherent, even though the first violin may change from concert to concert, and the strings are not always given the same rank.

Ozawa explains: "Originally, the idea was to bring together ex-students of my teacher, Hideo Saito, who trained as a cellist and was an unparalleled teacher of string playing. Down the years, new players have been co-opted. We don't hold auditions. I know some musicians personally, of course. Others subsequently become part of the team.

"Their cohesiveness is largely due, I think, to their freshness of approach. Some of them had never played in an orchestra before, My three first cellists at the moment had had no playing experience of Schubert's Great C Major Symphony until we gave a concert performance of it.

"When the viola player Nobuko Imai performed with us, she had never played in any of the Brahms symphonies before. We have no particular routine. The musicians are here to give of their best during the few recording sessions and tours we do every year. In between, they go back to their jobs as music teachers, soloists or players in other orchestras.

"Getting into a rut is one of the dangers that dogs even the greatest orchestras. Yet members of the Vienna Philharmonic take an interest in what they are asked to do and respond in an unusually open-minded way when a new way of playing Mozart is suggested to them."

Ozawa, who is resident conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, says: "When Bernard Haitink comes to Boston to conduct Mahler, the players are happy to go along with his style, which is not the same as mine. They know how to avoid knee-jerk reactions."

Money naturally has a positive effect on the players. Their ideal working conditions, which have been discreetly sponsored by Seiko-Epson ever since the first year of the Saito Kinen Festival in 1984, include high fees, nice hotels and good concert halls.

For the 1998 Saito Kinen Festival, Ozawa is planning to put on Berlioz's cantata, La Damnation de Faust, with a "dream cast". For the time being he is keeping their names up his sleeve.

While Ozawa specialises in works by French composers, he is also a great fan of his compatriot and friend, Toru Takemitsu, who died in March last year. In September, Ozawa and the Saito Kinen Orchestra gave a memorable retrospective season of Takemitsu's works in Matsumoto.

"He had a dreamy, contemplative temperament — he could spend hours listening to the sound of the wind in a field of bamboo," Ozawa remembers. "At the same time he was a Western composer, deeply influenced by Debussy, Ravel and Messiaen, who regarded Takemitsu as an absolutely unique composer.

"I'm sad we were unable to bring to fruition his last project for the Lyon Opera House and the Saito Kinen Festival. It was the story of a flying whale, which he imagined actually coming from the back of the auditorium, floating above the audience.

"All that remains of the project is four or five pages of music. I've given it a good look, but unfortunately it's not complete enough to be performed. Takemitsu remained a dreamer right up to the last moment."

(April 23)

Yeltsin Puts Pen to Deal With Jiang

Lee Hockstader in Moscow

THE PRESIDENTS of Russia and China signed a declaration last week formally endorsing "a new multipolar world" that would counterbalance U.S. global muscle.

A spokesman for President Boris Yeltsin called the document a "breakthrough" in Moscow's relations in Asia. The Chinese leader, Jiang Zemin, was slightly more cautious, saying the Chinese-Russian relationship "is not an alliance" but one of "bilateral cooperation and friendship."

But beyond pomp, ceremony and warm words at their Moscow summit, there was little sign of the specific policies or actions Yeltsin and Jiang planned that would advance the "new international order" they gravely proclaimed. Although both presidents took pains not to mention the United States by name, their resentment of America's unrivaled clout hung over the hour-long Kremlin signing ceremony.

"Some are pulling the world toward a unipolar order," said Yeltsin, who, when he met with President Clinton in Helsinki a month ago, appeared out of sorts at a news conference afterward. "Someone wants to dictate order in the world. And we want a multipolar world. . . . These poles constitute the foundation of a new world order."

China is on record as supporting Russia's bitter opposition to the eastward expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), in which the United States plays the leading role. NATO is expected to announce in July that it will add new members from the former Soviet-dominated Warsaw Pact — probably Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

Without specifically citing NATO, the joint declaration implicitly criticized its expansion plans, saying: "Both sides express concern over attempts to enlarge and strengthen military blocs since such a tendency may pose a threat to the security of some countries and aggravate regional and global tensions."

Few details were available on what the declared warming in Russian-Chinese relations would mean. But Yeltsin's Communist and nationalist foes in parliament, who have little love for the Chinese but even less for the Americans, applauded it.

In the past, mutual suspicions between the two Asian giants ran deep. China and the Soviet Union were communist allies in the 1950s, joining forces to support North Korea in the Korean War and posing what the West saw at the time as a formidable menace in the East.

But their relations cooled in the 1960s amid ideological differences and competition for prestige in the communist world, and in 1969 there were border clashes between Chinese and Soviet troops. That left an icy legacy that did not begin to thaw until Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev visited Beijing in 1989.

Even now, the two sides often regard each other warily. In December, for example, Russian Defense Minister Igor Rodionov warned on the eve of a Moscow visit by Chinese Premier Li Peng that China remained a military threat to Russia.

Rodionov visited China last month and changed his tune in advance of Jiang's visit. A member of his traveling delegation told Russia's Interfax news agency that not only does China no longer pose a threat, but that "Russia can supply China with up-to-date arms and technology for their production without harm to its own security."

Yeltsin, who returned from a vacation in southern Russia to greet the Chinese leader, said the occasion is "of enormous, possibly historic, importance as we are determining the fate of the 21st century."

Jiang addressed the Russian parliament with a similar message of friendship and "strategic" partnership.

In a separate accord signed last week, Russia, China and three Central Asian neighbors agreed to reduce military forces along their shared 4,340-mile border, but the extent of the actual pullback of forces remained unclear.

In a Kremlin ceremony, Yeltsin, Jiang and the leaders of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakstan and Tajikistan signed what Yeltsin called an "unprecedented" agreement climaxing seven years of negotiation. Jiang hailed the agreement as a "model of security differing from the Cold War mentality."

Bear hugs at the Kremlin this week as Presidents Yeltsin and Jiang challenge the US as the world's only superpower

Senate Approves Chemical Arms Pact

Helen Dewar

THE SENATE last week approved a global treaty banning production and use of chemical weapons, handing President Clinton a major foreign policy victory.

The treaty was approved by a larger-than-anticipated vote of 74 to 26, with 29 Republicans joining all 45 Democrats in voting for it. This was seven votes more than the two-thirds majority required to approve ratification of treaties.

Treaty supporters also succeeded in stripping out five provisions demanded by Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jesse Helms, R-North Carolina, and other conservative treaty foes. The provisions were adamantly opposed by the Clinton administration as treaty "killers" or threats to implementation.

After delaying action for nearly four years, Clinton staked a large measure of his prestige on the outcome, both at home and abroad, lobbying long and hard for its approval in the face of conservative Republican opposition.

Approval was assured after Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Mississippi, whose position was seen as key to a dozen or more Republican votes, endorsed the treaty. He said he was persuaded largely by White House agreement to a long list of treaty clarifications.

Lott said the clincher came when Clinton sent him a letter pledging to withdraw from the treaty if other countries exploited its provisions to endanger the security of the United States or spread technology for development of poison gas weapons — an elaboration on earlier administration assurances on these subjects.

"I believe the U.S. is marginally better off with it [the treaty] than without it," Lott said. It may be difficult to verify and enforce, and it may not "rid the world of poison gas," as conservative foes of the pact have argued, he conceded. But he said there would be "real and lasting consequences to the United States" if the treaty were rejected, casting doubts over the credibility of the nation's foreign policy and its stature in the world.

Lott was the only member of the top GOP leadership in the Senate to support the treaty. Helms remained resolutely opposed to the end. While the treaty had been made "much less harmful" by provisos demanded by himself and other conservatives, it remained a "dangerous" document, Helms said.

The treaty appeared to have gathered impressive strength even before Lott announced his position, thanks in part to a surprise boost from former Republican presidential nominee Bob Dole.

The treaty has been signed by 164 countries, 74 of which have already ratified it, including all other NATO countries and Japan. Under the terms of the treaty, member states are obliged to destroy all chemical weapons and production facilities by 2007. The United States and Russia — the two countries with by far the largest stockpiles of chemical arms — already have pledged to destroy them.

Lee Hockstader in Moscow adds: The Russian parliament, pleading poverty, refused last week to ratify the treaty. The vote, a slap in the face for both the Clinton and Yeltsin administrations, came a day after the U.S. Senate approved the ban.

Although the Communist-dominated parliament suggested it will approve the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention this fall, the vote means the weapons ban — the product of years of arduous negotiations — may go into effect this week without the participation of one of its two major signatories.

The vote further highlights what Moscow's own experts characterize as a ticking time bomb: a vast and aging stock of chemical weapons — some 40,000 tons stored in conditions described as rapidly deteriorating and increasingly unsafe. But lawmakers said Russia would be hard pressed to pay even a fraction of the more than $5 billion needed to destroy the arsenal without large infusions of Western aid.

"It's simple: There's a lack of cash," said Vladimir Lukin, former ambassador to Washington and head of the foreign affairs committee of the Russian State Duma, the lower house of parliament. "We have one of the largest amounts of chemical weapons, so we have to have understanding" from the West.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said the United States is "extremely disappointed" by the Duma's decision. "We would hope that the Russian government and Duma could work out whatever concerns that the Duma has," he said.

In Burma's Case, Sanctions Make Sense

EDITORIAL

THE CLINTON administration's decision to bar further U.S. investment in the Southeast Asian nation of Burma has sparked charges of hypocrisy. Why impose sanctions on Burma but not China? Why isolate Cuba but engage with North Korea? Why punish Libya but do business with Nigeria?

The Clinton administration, it's true, hasn't been hobbled by consistency in its dealings with odious regimes. The first post-Cold War president has been feeling his way toward a new balance of commercial advantage, moral concern and other national interests, and he hasn't always come up with the right mix.

But even an ideal foreign policy won't produce a single, all-purpose recipe for handling rogue states or encouraging democratization. Sanctions aren't the answer for every bad regime; historical precedent, U.S. public opinion, allies' sentiment and practical questions of what is achievable all will and should be considered.

In the case of Burma, the administration — with a big push from Congress — has ended up in the right place. Rarely has a nation been more deserving of economic sanction.

That's true, first, because Burma's regime is about as odious as they come. The military bullies who run the nation engage in torture and repression on a mass scale. Their particular specialty is press-ganging children and adults into slave labor.

They control the economy so tightly and corruptly that foreign investment can only strengthen their grip, rather than creating space for resistance, as it might in less authoritarian countries.

Burma also is different because it has a legitimate, democratically elected leader — Aung San Suu Kyi, the courageous woman who overwhelmingly won a 1990 election, but who has been kept under house arrest pretty much ever since. She has made clear that foreign investment and tourism are counterproductive.

Finally, there's a chance in this instance that resolute U.S. action, backed by a diplomatic campaign, could spur international action along the lines of the multilateral sanctions that helped end apartheid in South Africa.

Japan has resolutely barred foreign aid and official loans to Burma; it could do more. Europe recently suspended some trading privileges. Canada and Australia are debating trade sanctions.

Only Burma's neighbors in Southeast Asia continue with no embarrassment to favor "constructive engagement," which Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, D-New York, last week called "a euphemism for doing business with thugs."

Now, all the more, the burden is on those countries to press the military regime in Rangoon toward dialogue, or to join in a principled stand against Burma's barbarity.

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Zaire's Neighbors Cheer Rebel Gains

Stephen Buckley in Kigali, Rwanda

A CHEERING sound is rippling through Zaire's neighboring countries — hailing the apparently imminent demise of President Mobutu Sese Seko, seen by nearby nations as a meddlesome dictator whose downfall is overdue.

The Rwandans despise him because he allowed Rwandan Hutu refugees — many of whom tried to exterminate Rwandan Tutsis in 1994 — to use eastern Zaire to rearm and to prepare for an invasion.

The Angolan government remembers Mobutu's vital support for rebels during that country's civil war. Rebels from Uganda have used eastern Zaire as a training ground. And Ethiopia and Eritrea, both vigorously opposed to Sudan's fundamentalist Muslim regime, hope to stifle that country's attempts to use eastern Zaire as a base in its ongoing war against south Sudanese rebels.

"Mobutu has made all of these countries so angry that they can't wait to see him go," one senior Western embassy official in the region said. "And they all want him out for essentially the same reason: security, security, security."

Security and commercial interests have driven Zaire's neighbors to aid the rebels in the six-month-old insurgency against Mobutu, who has spent nearly 32 years lording over Africa's third-largest nation.

The rebels' Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire has barreled through half of Zaire and now churns toward the capital, Kinshasa, the only major city left to take in the country.

Zaire's neighbors have greeted the rebel movement with glee and, with increasing openness, have become important participants in the insurgency.

The Ugandans have provided, among other things, logistical support, financial help and soldiers. The Burundians provided strategic help during the rebellion's early phases. The Angolans have supplied troops and equipment. There is strong but largely circumstantial evidence of Eritrean and Ethiopian involvement, diplomats say. Eritreans are believed to have helped train the rebels, and the Ethiopians are thought to be providing small arms.

The most significant help arguably has come from the Rwandans, who allowed hundreds, perhaps thousands, of their troops to join the rebels after the Zairian government threatened to expel members of the Tutsi ethnic group.

The soldiers who were allowed to join the conflict were Tutsis with Zairian ancestry, known as the Banyamulenge. But most of these troops — and their parents and grandparents — had grown up in Rwanda or Uganda. "The problem with the Banyamulenge is that they could legitimately claim to be from all three of those countries," one diplomat said. "So it's hard for the Rwandans to argue that they were simply allowing the Banyamulenge to go back home."

With the Banyamulenge forming the core of their fighting force, the rebels raced through eastern Zaire, shutting a string of camps of Rwandan Hutus who had swarmed across the border after their ethnic group slaughtered more than 500,000 Tutsis in 1994.

The Banyamulenge had been among Rwanda's most experienced soldiers. Many took part in Yoweri Museveni's guerrilla movement in Uganda during the 1980s, and later joined a Rwandan Tutsi rebel force that eventually overthrew the Hutu-run regime that directed the genocide in 1994.

"Their help [in the Zaire rebellion] has been considerable," said Alison Des Forges, a consultant with Human Rights Watch/Africa who has studied Rwanda for three decades. "It wasn't so much the number of troops. It was the fact that they were high-level troops, who brought lots of expertise and advice and strategic help."

Rwanda government officials initially played down the role of soldiers who left their army. But in recent weeks, they have admitted that those troops have had a crucial hand in the rebel movement.

"There was no way we could avoid involvement," said Seth Kamanzi, a presidential adviser for international affairs. "Mobutu had been a thorn in our flesh. He encouraged the [militias and former Rwandan soldiers] to train in his territory ... Everyone knows now that they were planning an invasion . . . Because of the Banyamulenge, the people of this country can sleep at night."

But the work of the rebels is not done. Rwandan officials fret that even the remaining 100,000 Hutus in Zaire — many from the militias and former army that led the genocide — could become the nucleus for a future rebel movement.

One Western diplomat recently charged that the rebels, bowing to Rwanda's concerns, were trying "to push the refugees into the swamps and starve them to death."

"As long as you have thousands of Hutus in eastern Zaire, the Rwandan government will not be satisfied," one European diplomat said. "They themselves were in exactly the same position. They know the danger this could represent."

● President Clinton escalated U.S. efforts to end Zaire's civil war last weekend by dispatching United Nations Ambassador Bill Richardson to Africa to seek a settlement between the faltering Zairian government and rebel leaders.

In Brief

THE violent blast that ripped apart the federal building in Oklahoma City two years ago reverberated through a courtroom in Denver last week as the government opened its case with the only known recording of the fatal explosion.

Relatives of the victims wept as a tape recording of a mundane water rights hearing on April 19, 1995, turned into a chilling 15-second tableau of horror. Recorded in a building 100 feet from the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, the tape begins with a voice routinely explaining the upcoming hearing, which is abruptly interrupted by the deafening blast and frantic screams.

Prosecutors began their case against defendant Timothy J. McVeigh with what is likely to be some of the most emotionally wrenching and graphic testimony of the trial.

None of the moving testimony about the bombing, which killed 168 people, ties McVeigh to the crime. But it builds an emotional foundation for the prosecution's forthcoming presentation of largely dry and circumstantial evidence against the decorated Persian Gulf War veteran.

AN AIR Force search team found human remains last week believed to be the missing pilot of an A-10 attack jet that disappeared during a routine training mission three weeks ago in Arizona and flew 800 miles before crashing in the snowy mountains in Colorado.

The location and disposition of the four 500-pound Mk-82 bombs aboard the plane remain unknown.

Air Force officials concluded that Capt. Craig Button, 32, went down with his plane, crashing on a steep slope 12,500 feet up Gold Dust Peak southwest of Vail, Colorado.

The plane's wreckage is scattered over hundreds of yards, and it is assumed that Button died on impact. His warplane's fuel tanks would have been very nearly empty, and there is no evidence the plane ignited on crash.

RICHARD McLaren, the self-described ambassador of a separatist group in remote southwest Texas, has vowed that authorities will never arrest him alive. Last Sunday, a man was wounded and McLaren was holding two persons hostage after he engaged in an armed standoff with sheriff's deputies and other authorities.

The standoff was at the mountain "embassy" of the Republic of Texas, near Fort Davis, a small town of 1,200 in one of the most isolated parts of the country, said Sherry Green, a spokeswoman for the Texas Department of Public Safety.

McLaren, 43, who was wanted for failing to appear at a December federal court hearing involving his filing of bogus liens against Texas property owners, told a San Antonio radio station that he would not end the standoff until authorities "agree to a referendum to allow Texas to vote on the independence issue."

End of Lima Siege Boosts Fujimori

Anthony Faiola in Lima

"LOOK, THERE goes our president," said a beaming Segundo Diaz. Diaz, 50, a taxi driver, joined a crowd near the airport in spontaneous applause as President Alberto Fujimori hustled toward his car surrounded by a gaggle of bodyguards.

"He's the strong one — the one who's made this country proud," Diaz explained.

For now, an overwhelming number of Peruvians appear to feel the same way. Fujimori, who on Tuesday last week forced an end to a four-month standoff with Marxist rebels occupying the Japanese ambassador's residence, now basks in some of the highest popularity ratings of his political career.

According to a poll last week, Fujimori's approval rating jumped to 67 percent, up from 38 percent four days before he ordered the daring rescue of the 72 hostages held by the rebels. During the raid, one hostage, two soldiers and all 14 rebels of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement were killed.

"This is the same reaction the Americans had after President Bush attacked Iraq," said Alfredo Torres, whose Apoyo SA firm interviewed more than 400 residents of Lima, the sprawling capital where almost two-thirds of Peru's nearly 24 million people live. "As with Bush, that popularity may not last. But for now, the people are behind him: They are sad at the loss of life, but they strongly believe in what he's done."

For a president who won the 1995 election almost wholly on his reputation as a tough guy against terrorists, Fujimori last week further cemented his claims to be the savior of a country long troubled by rebellious violence. Public opinion, experts said, is unlikely to blame him for the initial takeover of the embassy either. Indeed, the weekend before the military action he accepted the resignations of his interior minister and police chief, who were, in part, blamed for the security lapse that allowed the seizure of the embassy.

Peruvian soldiers are all smiles after storming the Japanese embassy in Lima last week to free hostages held by rebels

Political analysts cautioned that Fujimori's burst in popularity may be fleeting. Although he won the praise of Peruvians by ending a painful stalemate, his dealings with the even harsher problems of Peru, including unemployment and poverty, are more likely to be the ultimate gauge of his popularity.

"His opposition may seem small now, but I wouldn't look at this popularity gain as long-term," said Giguanna Pena Flor, a Peruvian political analyst. "The people are happy now, but it will take more to keep them happy."

But Fujimori's forceful answer to the standoff also appealed to the nationalistic pride of other Peruvians, many of whom saw the takeover as an affront to Peru's dignity.

"For all those months, we thought he was doing nothing," said student Laura Caja Leon, 18, as she sat outside the Presidential Palace in downtown Lima at lunchtime. "But he was all the time planning this. He is not only strong, he is wise."

Doris Rossel, 28, a street peddler for five years in front of the Palace of Justice, where the body of the lone slain hostage, Supreme Court Judge Carlos Giusti Acuna, lay in a coffin covered by flowers, said she felt pained by Fujimori's forceful response.

"I felt sad when they started the bombing and I heard the shots, because I knew that there were people inside," said Rossel, a single mother of four. Was she hurt by the death of the rebels? "Of course. They are human beings, and they are Peruvians. They have made mistakes, but they are people, like us."

Adolfo, 48, a retired police officer who would only give his first name, saying he feared he would be harmed by the government, added: "I could see that [Fujimori's] popularity was falling, and Peru was looking bad to the outside world. I think he made this decision [not to continue negotiations] because his popularity was falling."

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China Smugglers Profit From Kids

Keith B. Richburg in Hong Kong

KOK MAN-SING is only 8 years old but has already experienced a lifetime's worth of trauma — separation, flight, refuge and now the constant fear of apprehension followed by certain deportation. He is a pint-size fugitive, an illegal immigrant from China, brought here on a motorboat in the dead of night by "snakeheads," or local smugglers. And he is on the run.

"I was scared the policemen would come," Man-sing said, describing his flight here with his 7-year-old sister, Kok Man-kok, crammed on a motorized sampan with about 50 other illegal immigrants. "We came at night-time, but I don't know what time it was."

When they arrived, sometime near dawn, he and Man-kok, armed with only an address scrawled on a piece of paper, found their way to their parents' house, and the family was reunited after nearly two years.

"I'm afraid to go back to China," said Man-sing, sporting a new Chicago Bulls baseball cap and a gray warm-up suit. "I like Hong Kong a lot. I want to get my identity card so I can stay longer. I like the television, and I like playing. Even though I don't have any friends, if I stay longer I'll be happier. I never want to go back to China."

As he spoke, a boy next to him nodded agreement. "The Chinese government is rotten," said Yong Dong-chuen, 12, who also is facing repatriation. "I'm not afraid. I won't go back, even if they make me."

The boys are part of a wave of hundreds of illegal immigrant children who have been flooding over the border from southern China in record numbers in recent weeks, sparking a budding humanitarian crisis and prompting social workers to warn of an even larger human swarm to come. So far this year, about 1,500 children are believed to have crossed the border illegally, about double the number who crossed in all of 1996. The influx is straining the resources of local welfare agencies.

Almost all the migrant children are from Guangdong Province, born to Hong Kong men who went back to China to marry and start families. In most cases, the men returned to Hong Kong but the children were forced to vie for places on a lengthy waiting list for the right to move here.

When Hong Kong reverts to Chinese control on July 1, these Chinese children of Hong Kong parents are guaranteed the right to reside here under the Basic Law, the mini-constitution that will govern this territory's affairs. Many feel their best chance is to come in now, before July 1, because they fear the border will become even more tightly controlled once China takes charge.

The Guangdong public security bureau and Hong Kong social workers estimate that 130,000 children are waiting to be reunited with their families here. Under a quota system, Hong Kong currently allows only 150 permits for one-way border crossings each day, with 66 of those slots set aside for children reuniting with parents.

"This is a very critical moment," said Ho Hei-wah, director of the Society for Community Organization, which is assisting the families. "If they can stay in Hong Kong until the first of July, they automatically have the right of abode" because of the Basic Law.



Cross purposes . . . An illegal Chinese immigrant smuggled into Hong Kong to give birth secures citizenship for her newborn baby PHOTOGRAPH: RICHARD JONES

The incoming government of Tung Chee-hwa, China's future chief executive for Hong Kong, recognizes that the influx of children, and the 130,000 more waiting to cross, is one of the most pressing issues it will face.

"It lands squarely on our shoulders; we've got to tackle it," said Antony K. Leung, the managing director of Chase Manhattan Bank here and one of Tung's executive counselors. "The question is how to get them to Hong Kong on an orderly basis. We have to see if we can find ways to stop them from coming [all] at once." Among other problems, Leung said, a sudden influx of 130,000 new children after July would overburden the already crowded school system.

Most of the parents, though, are not interested in waiting. Many say they have waited long enough and have had to endure not only the grinding bureaucracy in China, but also corrupt local officials who demand huge bribes to give children higher places on the waiting lists.

The government here has announced that those children entering illegally will be sent back to China and forced to wait their turn through established channels. To allow them to stay, officials have said, would lead to a rush of illegal immigrants, which would cause a hazard because of the risky sea voyage. A general amnesty also would be unfair to those who have waited their turn to come legally, officials say.

Other illegal immigrants here have told of corrupt Guangdong officials demanding bribes in exchange for favorable places on the waiting list. While the officials charge applicants the equivalent of $25,000 for favorable treatment, the snakeheads offer more immediate passage to Hong Kong at cut-rate prices. One young woman said she paid a snakehead $12,500 for three persons — herself, a sister and her 6-year-old brother.

Some parents here say they would rather wait than put their children's lives in the hands of the snakeheads. "The children are coming over illegally because of the pressure from the parents," said Choi Wai-kwan, a Hong Kong wholesaler who married in Guangdong in 1985 and has been waiting ever since to bring his wife and four children here. "The parents are too impatient, and too anxious."

India's 'Bandit Queen' Takes Centre Stage

Kenneth J. Cooper in New Delhi

THERE IS a former bandit in the lower house of India's Parliament, an admitted lawbreaker turned lawmaker.

Still wanted on murder charges, Phoolan Devi twice failed to appear in court this year. She eluded a rather passive womanhunt by police, disappearing for three weeks until she walked past security guards at the People's House, as Parliament's lower chamber is called, and sat down to listen to a budget debate.

The order for her arrest had been stayed pending appeal, so Devi left the circular sandstone building in late February a free woman.

For the past year, Devi, 36, has starred in an improbable political drama playing in the world's largest democracy. Born into a poor, lower-caste family, she became a child bride at 11, but abandoned her forcibly consummated marriage to become the leader of an armed gang.

Her crew roamed the badlands of Uttar Pradesh state between 1979 and 1983, waging what she has described as criminal warfare against the upper castes. Her story was made into a controversial 1994 movie, Bandit Queen.

In 1981, Devi allegedly killed 20 men, most from an upper caste, to avenge what she said was her gang rape in their village the previous year.

She surrendered in 1983, agreed to give up banditry and spent 11 years in prison under an extrajudicial agreement with elected state officials. She has never been convicted of any crime. Last year she ran for Parliament and won.



Devi: political drama

But the widows of the men slain in 1981 have been pressing to bring Devi to court before an apparently obliging judge in Uttar Pradesh. Other unresolved cases stemming from her outlaw days bring to more than 50 the number of murder and robbery charges pending against her.

The possibility that Devi may face trial has raised questions about the nature of Indian justice and highlighted divisions not only between men and women, but also between upper and lower castes.

"The widows want justice," said Vijay Senger, their lawyer. "Justice is not the task of the political leaders, it is the task of the judiciary."

"I was in jail for 11 years," Devi said. "Why didn't they have trials then? I also want some justice after all the wrong done to me."

Devi is tough and hostile in confrontations. At other times she shows an extreme sense of vulnerability. "I want to tell the world — I want to cry and tell everybody I was raped," Devi said on Zee TV, an Indian network. "I don't think I am alive. I died 16, 17 years ago, but I live so women can take courage from me."

As a bandit and lawmaker, Devi says she has fought to help women, minority Muslims and others like herself from castes at the bottom of the traditional Hindu hierarchy of religious purity, social status and occupation.

The movie's evocative rendering of Devi as a victim won her admirers in Europe and the United States. A British legislator nominated her for the Nobel Peace Prize and compared the former outlaw to two previous winners, Nelson Mandela of South Africa and Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma.

But Senger, the widows' lawyer, disputes the film's portrayal of Devi as a bandit who waged caste warfare. Of 40 people she is alleged to have killed, nearly half did not belong to upper castes, he said.

Asked about Senger's caste-based count of her alleged victims, Devi dismissed the charges as "baseless accusations." She admitted having been a bandit, but not to committing specific crimes.

Women and low-caste Indians tend to defend Devi's presence in Parliament, while men and members of upper castes more often condemn her. "There's no way she should be anywhere near Parliament. There are still cases pending against her," said Vinoo Samuel, a marketing representative in New Delhi.

Critics have accused Devi of continuing to act like a bandit since being elected last May from Uttar Pradesh as a member of a socialist party that belongs to India's ruling coalition.

THERE was the time, for instance, when Devi reportedly forced an express train to make unscheduled stops to pick her up and drop her off, and another time when she made an unannounced visit to inspect conditions in a jail and verbally abused officials who would not admit her.

In February, she appeared to be once again on the run from the law, this time while under the protection of a government bodyguard. Indian newspapers reported that top politicians had ordered police not to look hard enough for Devi to find her and bring her to court.

Devi denied "running from the law," but also admitted that "my lawyers suggested I should be somewhat untraceable [because] I would get some relief and there would be no need to go to jail."

Indians who have grown cynical about government find little in Devi's recent behavior that makes her different from other politicians who have been known to commandeer trains and berate low-level officials. And, although a 1996 survey of international business executives ranked India among the world's most corrupt countries, prominent politicians almost never go to prison for taking bribes.

"She is no better or worse than any other of our politicians in Parliament. She should not be singled out," said Saurabh Chawla, a financial analyst.

Devi, who pledged not to abscond, has two other ways of avoiding a trial and possibly more prison time. "I will appear in court and apply for bail. I would like to somehow finish the cases," she said.

She also has appealed for a presidential pardon, but the request is stuck on political uncertainties. Parliament must soon decide on another term for the current president, Shankar Sharma, or elect a new one.

Granting a pardon based on the 11 years she has served would not deviate from sentencing patterns in India, which imprisons murderers for no more than 14 years and rarely imposes the death penalty. But the constitution appears to require Devi to have been convicted in order to be eligible for a pardon.

A Peacemaker Remembered

Glenn Frankel

RABIN: Our Life, His Legacy
By Leah Rabin
Putnam. 320pp. $24.95

RUBBER BULLETS: Power and Conscience in Modern Israel
By Yaron Ezrahi
Farrar Straus Giroux. 308pp. $25

ISRAEL'S passage from a small, collectivist, garrison state under siege to a modern, bourgeois and pluralistic democracy is a hard road strewn with discarded myths and the blood of many martyrs. Leah Rabin's tear-stained memoir of life with her late husband and Yaron Ezrahi's powerful, clear-eyed treatise on Israel's inner turmoils are seemingly as different as fire and ice. Yet the underlying theme of both is this national transformation: its triumphs and failures, its heroes and victims.

Leah Rabin, widow of the prime minister who made peace with the Palestinians and then was assassinated by a fellow Jew, makes no attempt to conceal her two agendas. The first is "to carry his message forward, to ignite again and again the brilliant light that was so brutally extinguished," she writes. "I am here to remind you of him." The second, unspoken but just as pressing, is to even accounts with any number of her husband's political enemies, including current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his Likud predecessor, Yitzhak Shamir. Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat comes off far better than they do in her reckoning.

Leah Rabin was a political wife par excellence; her role, as she saw it, was not only to look after her husband but to keep score. An Israeli journalist recalled for me once how he had befriended Yitzhak Rabin in the late 1970s when the then-former prime minister was languishing on the Israeli Labor Party's back benches. Rabin was grateful for my friend's attention. Then after Rabin returned from the political wilderness to become defense minister in 1984, the journalist wrote something mildly critical. Rabin had no particular problem with it — he probably didn't even read it — but Leah did. From then on my friend was persona non grata with the Rabin household. Lesson: You could toy with Yitzhak, but don't cross Leah. She took no prisoners.

How ironic, then, that it was Leah, lioness and protector, who cost her husband the premiership during his first round in office in the 1970s. She was the one who neglected to close the joint bank account they had kept in Washington when he had served as Israeli ambassador to the United States.

Israeli residents are not allowed to have such accounts, and once the Rabins returned home they were in technical violation of the law. When the account became public in 1977, Rabin felt compelled to resign. She notes that he never chastised her over the incident, but she confesses she has no clue to the one beguiling question that remains about this well-documented affair: Why did Rabin choose to resign over such an inconsequential misdemeanor? "Yitzhak fundamentally kept his own counsel in this matter," she admits.

Too much of this memoir is in a similar vein: It offers facts we've already read elsewhere about Rabin's rise to army chief of staff, his controversial stint as defense minister during the Palestinian uprising, his two terms as prime minister, his signing of the Oslo peace accords and his murder. There are a few moments that reveal the human side of a leader known for terrorizing his subordinates as much as his enemies. Leah Rabin describes her husband's backseat driving and his love of children and animals. It is Rabin Lite, and it jars against the memory of the gruff, profane and gutsy leader we know from other portraits.

Of the author herself, we get a less varnished picture. Her patience for fools, she admits, is limited, and her own tongue is often barbed. She recounts her bitter reproach to the sympathetic mourners who gathered outside her home after the assassination: "It's a pity that you all weren't here when there were demonstrators on the other side of the street calling him a traitor and a murderer."

Most jarring are long spasms of anguish and lament that are scattered like thunderstorms throughout the text in italics. Leah Rabin wants us all to feel her pain; it's an understandable emotion, but one that cannot sustain an entire book.


DRAWING OF YITZHAK RABIN BY GARY VISKUPIC

ONE important point she makes is that the old warrior's decision to make peace with the Palestinians was not a reversal of a lifetime's beliefs but rather a confirmation of his essential pragmatism. Rabin was always looking for an opening on the Arab side, although he may not have always recognized one when he saw it. And unlike his Likud predecessors, he had no ideological hangups about dealing with the Palestine Liberation Organization when the opportunity arose. About peace he may have been a skeptic, but never an opponent.

Like Leah Rabin, Yaron Ezrahi makes no attempt at objectivity. He begins his book by describing his conflicted feelings while watching a newscast on the Israeli army's harsh treatment of Palestinian stone throwers with his 84-year-old father and his 16-year-old son. He wants both to protect his father from seeing Israel's cherished citizen-army at its worst, yet to sear it into the consciousness of his son, who is due to enter the army in two years. "I was seized by the impulse to cover my father's eyes with my right hand," he writes, "while somehow keeping my son's eyes wide open with my left."

But Rubber Bullets is much more than a personal testament. Ezrahi, a professor of political science at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and a leader of the Israeli peace movement, is an intellectual detective who systematically uncovers clues to explain a nation's coming of age. He traces the slow rise of individualism in a society that started out as an ideologically oriented state where the needs of the community took precedence over freedom of choice.

The transformation has been far from smooth. Ezrahi describes the conflict between Zionist tradition and the emerging Israel as a "battle of the stories," in which the state's collective narrative clashes with the personal, private narrative of the individual. He cites the ruling of Israel's Supreme Court two years ago that for the first time permitted the bereaved families of slain soldiers to break the uniformity of official inscriptions on gravestones in military cemeteries. The army sees a dead soldier as a martyr to the national cause and an inspiration to others to serve, he writes, while the family sees a dead child with a distinctive personality and dreams.

Ezrahi goes on to trace a similar pattern of evolution in areas such as language and history. And he sees this evolution as a key reason why Israelis were prepared to make peace with Palestinians and end what has been a Hundred Years War between Arab and Jew.

His prose sparkles with good sense and shrewd insights. He writes analysis in the best sense: taking small moments or decisions and weaving them into a convincing tapestry of social and ideological change.

Doom and Gloom Merchants' Crescendo of Despair

Gertrude Himmelfarb

THE IDEA OF DECLINE IN WESTERN HISTORY
By Arthur Herman
Free Press. 521pp. $30

"THERE is a great deal of ruin in a nation," Adam Smith said. And so there is in a civilization. We have been living with predictions of decline and fall for so long that we have become inured to them. Yet nations have, finally, been ruined. It is sobering to think back not only to the Roman Empire but to the Holy Roman and Ottoman Empires, or to the Golden Ages of Spain and Holland. Western civilization has thus far survived, but it is getting harder and harder to be sanguine about its future.

In the introduction to his book, Arthur Herman explains that his subject is not the decline of Western civilization but the idea of its decline. But Western civilization as it has evolved in modern times is an idea, or at least a conglomerate of ideas — about liberty and democracy, rights and law, church and state, science and technology, private property and market economics. To the extent that these ideas are discredited, Western civilization itself is imperiled. It is not the prophecy of decline that is self-fulfilling; it is the evidence of decline, the loss of confidence in the ideas that have defined and sustained our civilization.

That evidence, as presented in this book, is powerful and persuasive. Theories of decline are as old as Western civilization itself, the self-critical spirit being an essential part of this civilization. But it was in the Enlightenment that they became most interesting, as a foil to the dominant, triumphal theory of progress. It was then, when reason and nature seemed to conspire together to assure the continued progress of mankind, when men who were taken seriously by their peers — Condorcet in France, Godwin in England — could anticipate a time when perfectibility would be achieved and mortality extinguished, that others came along to refute those happy prospects; Rousseau insisted that civilization itself was corrupting, and Malthus that the inexorable law of population would condemn most people to a life of "misery and vice."

The crescendo of despair rose in the following centuries, even as the material conditions of life vastly improved, as the opportunities for social and economic advance expanded, as science vanquished disease and technology opened up vistas of new worlds to be conquered, and as more and more people came to enjoy the rights and privileges of citizenship. Moreover, it was not only particular aspects of civilization that came under attack; it was the whole of it.

The subjects of this book — more than a dozen major figures and scores of minor ones — propounded grand theories about the decay and degeneration of Western civilization. Herman categorizes them as "historical pessimists" (Jacob Burckhardt, Oswald Spengler, Henry Adams), "cultural pessimists" (Friedrich Nietzsche, Herbert Marcuse, Michel Foucault), and "racial pessimists" (Arthur de Gobineau, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Marcus Garvey). He distinguishes between those who deplore the decline (Burckhardt, Adams, Spengler) and those who welcome it (Nietzsche, Garvey, Foucault); between critics of the right (Burckhardt, Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger) and of the left (Marcuse, Foucault, Frantz Fanon).

It is not the prophecy of decline that is self-fulfilling; it is the evidence, the loss of confidence in ideas

Parts of the book read like potted history, a succession of names making cameo appearances on stage before being rapidly ushered off. With the major characters, however, Herman displays great virtuosity, managing to respect their differences and at the same time the common ideas that underlie them. Thus the theory of racial degeneracy is shown as an argument for imperialism (the duty of superior races to civilize primitive ones), and as an argument against it (the pure, vital races of the Third World being contaminated by the interbred and effete West).

We are all too familiar with the apocalyptic thinkers of old; we think we have put all that behind us. It is unnerving, therefore, to be confronted with our own prophets of doom echoing those old ideas, and even more, to discover that they are predominantly of the left rather than the right.

The Marxists of the "Frankfurt School," inveighing against capitalism, industrialism and mass culture, recall all too vividly the 19th-century reactionaries attributing the decline of Western civilization to the decadent forces of democracy and modernity. The disdain of the existentialists (Sartre, most notably) for bourgeois ideas of liberty and morality, culminating in the "humanist violence" they invoked to justify Stalinism, is unpleasantly reminiscent of the Nazis' contempt for the Weimar Republic, culminating in their seizure of power and reign of violence.

The final chapter on "Eco-pessimism" presents the ultimate form of pessimism, that induced by the pollution of the environment — cultural as well as physical — which will cause the demise not only of Western civilization but of all human civilization. This theory, too, although predominantly of the left, has its antecedents on the right — in Heidegger's diatribes against "technological capitalism".

In this company Herman locates Vice President Gore's Earth In The Balance, a sustained critique not only of the technology that, Gore says, is "colliding violently with our planet's ecological system" but also of the culture that puts a premium on such "inauthentic" values as the consumption of goods and "the pursuit of happiness and comfort." By putting the human community at odds with nature itself, Herman concludes, Gore "pushes cultural pessimism to a new extreme."

One is tempted to add other characters to this glossary of "declinists", but perhaps this is as much doom and gloom as the reader can comfortably take. What we can now use is a companion volume that will put the idea of the decline and fall of Western civilization in proper perspective — the perspective of two centuries of its rise and endurance, sometimes, as this book suggests, in the face of great adversity and animosity.

IMF warns against delay in euro start

Mark Tran in Washington and Larry Elliott

THE world's financial markets could be plunged into chaos if European Monetary Union fails to go ahead on time in 1999, the International Monetary Fund warned this week.

With the French, German and Italian governments battling to get their economies in shape for the single currency project, the IMF said there could be dire consequences in not sticking to the agreed schedule.

The warning came as finance ministers from the Group of Seven industrialised countries met in Washington to discuss the world economy, in particular the recent sharp rise in the US dollar.

Massimo Russo, an adviser to the managing director of the IMF, Michel Camdessus, said: "We at the IMF believe a delay in Stage Three [introduction of the full single currency] would lead to substantial dangers." A delay, he added, could lead to the project being shelved for some time, making it hard for countries to continue their efforts towards qualifying for EMU and causing chaos on financial markets.

Although Britain is likely to remain on the sidelines, the single currency and the European Central Bank are scheduled to come into effect on January 1, 1999.

It must be decided by the spring of 1998 which members of the European Union meet the initial criteria for entry to EMU. But the German finance minister, Theo Waigel, insisted that the scheduled start of the single currency should not be set in stone. Mr Waigel argued that the strict fulfilment of the Maastricht criteria had to take precedence over the timetable for the introduction of the euro, although he emphasised that Germany was determined to meet the Maastricht target of bringing the budget deficit to 3 per cent of GDP in 1997.

In its World Economic Outlook, the IMF forecasts that for this year Germany, France, Italy and Britain will all miss the target. Germany, France and Italy are projected to have a budget deficit of 3.3 per cent of GDP, while Britain's figure could be 3.1 per cent.

But the IMF acknowledges that its figures do not take into account government measures yet to be announced. Germany is likely to announce further fiscal tightening — either tax increases or spending reductions — this month. Italy insists that it will be part of the first wave, despite a report from the European Commission last week saying it would be one of only two European Union nations not to qualify.

During the UK election campaign both Labour and the Conservatives have moved towards a more sceptical position on the single currency, although the French government has brought forward parliamentary elections from the spring of 1998 to this month, seeking a mandate for measures to cut the budget deficit in line with the Maastricht treaty.

Fraud 'costs EU billions every year'

Stephen Bates in Brussels

CROSS-BORDER fraud in the European Union may be worth at least $68 billion a year and fraud within individual countries probably more than doubles the total, according to an independent report.

Accountancy firm Deloitte and Touche, which conducted the study for the European Commission, estimated that three-quarters of international fraud, from illegal credit card use and mobile phone cloning to counterfeit banknotes, may directly affect businesses and individuals rather than governments.

Will Inglis, the forensic accountant who drew up the findings, admitted that no one knows the true cost of a crime sector that has burgeoned because of technological developments and the opening of the EU's internal frontiers.

Mr Inglis, a Briton who specialises in company fraud cases, said: "Organised criminals are devoting more of their efforts to fraud. The man in the balaclava with a shotgun has realised that he will get a lower sentence and more money if he goes dressed in a suit and armed with a pen instead."

The accountants say that most fraud is white-collar, perpetrated by senior management or made possible by their incompetence or their inability to keep track of transactions.

The report is directly relevant to the British election campaign. The Conservatives say the fight against fraud is one of their key achievements in the EU, while maintaining they will oppose attempts to harmonise court systems which the report says would help counter cross-border crime.

Mr Inglis said: "There is clear evidence that determined fraudsters deliberately and cynically manipulate the different regulatory and monitoring regimes across the EU.

"The problem must be tackled on an international basis, as purely national measures will merely have the effect of transferring the fraud from one location to another."


Prodi . . . confident Italy will reach the single currency date 'with all its papers in order' PHOTO: PLINIO LEPRI

EMU forecast outrages Italians

John Palmer in Brussels and John Hooper in Rome

A EUROPEAN Commission forecast that 13 of the 15 European Union members will qualify for the single European currency in 1999 last week provoked outrage from Italy, excluded from the EMU premier league — and contradiction from the International Monetary Fund.

The Italian prime minister, Romano Prodi, launched a formal protest against the commission report that Italy, alone with Greece, is not on track to qualify.

Meanwhile the IMF, in its World Economic Outlook, said France and Germany, with Italy, would not meet the key budget deficit criterion of 3 per cent for entry to monetary union without further policy action.

It said all three would have deficits of 3.3 per cent this year, while France's would rise to 3.4 per cent and Italy's to 4.1 per cent in 1998, when Germany's would fall to 2.9 per cent.

"I believe that a majority of member states will meet the requirements for participation in the euro," the commissioner for the single currency, Yves-Thibault de Silguy, told the European Parliament in Brussels.

Mr de Silguy denied that the commission had massaged its forecasts under pressure from governments to present a rosy picture. "Governments can jump and shout and roll about but it will get them nowhere," he declared.

Mr Prodi said he found the commission's forecast "incomprehensible" because it had not taken into account all the evidence provided by the Italian government.

"The government . . . is deeply committed to following its own action of structural reform which will allow Italy to arrive at the single currency date with all its papers in order," he said.

The only comfort offered Mr Prodi by the commission was that Italy might still make monetary union if it takes further, long lasting, measures to cut the budget deficit. If this is politically impossible, the odds are that Italy will have to wait until the end of 1999 before joining the euro.

Mr de Silguy said that five countries had already, in effect, qualified for the single currency — Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Portugal, Spain and Sweden have also made progress in meeting the single currency criteria.

The commission report makes much of the evidence of faster economic recovery this spring but Mr de Silguy warned that unemployment in the EU would remain at about 10.3 per cent in 1998.

The irate reaction in Rome to the commission's report left no one in doubt that its government is determined, to the point of obsession, that Italy should be among the front runners.

Italian attitudes are partly about history and memories and emotion. The Italians suffered terribly in the post-war period and, every bit as much as French and German supporters of the European ideal, want to prevent future bloodshed by linking the big European states in common institutions. EMU is simply the latest institution.

Lurking in the background is a much darker calculation — the fear that exclusion from EMU could lead to Italy's disintegration.

Such is the commitment to monetary union in the north that exclusion would turn into even more fertile soil for the separatist Northern League and its plans for an independent Padania.

More rarely mentioned is the opposite risk — that if Italy does get in, it could split just as effectively. The threat is that the northern half of the country will compete successfully and prosper in the new euro zone, while the south just falls further behind.

In Brief

THE United States has called for a broad initiative to stamp out corruption, putting the issue firmly on the agenda of the G7 industrialised countries for the first time.

THE pound's storming rise on the foreign exchange is denting British exports and squeezing manufacturing profits, according to figures from the Office for National Statistics. Meanwhile the IMF has warned that Britain's sustained recovery needs to be reined in to prevent the economy from overheating.

LEGAL entanglements prevented the planned auction of Brazilian mining giant Companhia Vale do Rio Doce, the world's largest iron ore exporter. The sale should raise at least $5 billion for the government, one of the biggest Latin American state sell-offs to date.

UGANDA has become the first state to benefit from a World Bank initiative to ease the debt burden for poor countries as the Bank and the IMF agreed to a package worth $700 million.

ANDREW REGAN, whose $1.9 billion bid to take over the Co-operative Wholesale Society failed, is to be investigated for insider share dealing. Hambros merchant bank has apologised to the CWS for its part in backing Mr Regan.

THE European aircraft consortium, Airbus Industrie, and US aerospace group Lockheed Martin are holding merger talks in an attempt to combat Boeing's world dominance.

GLAXO has called off a three-year multi-million-dollar court battle to defend Zantac against a rival drug. Zantac is the best-selling drug on which the company built its fortune.

FIFTEEN top executives at Nomura, Japan's biggest broker, resigned after the company admitted that two of its executives had paid a gangster $560,000 through an illegal account.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates April 28	Sterling rates April 21
Australia	2.0792-2.0815	2.1050-2.1076
Austria	19.72-19.74	19.57-19.59
Belgium	57.84-57.90	57.39-57.59
Canada	2.2696-2.2716	2.2826-2.2850
Denmark	10.67-10.68	10.59-10.60
France	9.45-9.46	9.39-9.40
Germany	2.8029-2.8051	2.7816-2.7841
Hong Kong	12.57-12.58	12.66-12.67
Ireland	1.0522-1.0541	1.0496-1.0511
Italy	2,762-2,764	2,764-2,767
Japan	205.35-205.60	205.10-205.321
Netherlands	3.1541-3.1673	3.1272-3.1300
New Zealand	2.3346-2.3374	2.3542-2.3580
Norway	11.48-11.50	11.55-11.56
Portugal	281.03-281.25	280.28-280.55
Spain	236.30-236.56	235.15-235.35
Sweden	12.61-12.63	12.48-12.50
Switzerland	2.3650-2.3675	2.3575-2.3700
USA	1.6230-1.6238	1.6343-1.6353
ECU	1.4374-1.4390	1.4291-1.4307

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Please note only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.

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Department of Chemistry

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Further particulars may be obtained from the Director of Personnel Services, University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12 8QQ, to whom applications (8 copies; 1 copy in the case of overseas applicants) should be lodged on or before 30th June 1997. Informal enquiries may be made to the Head of Department, Professor J.M. Winfield (Tel: 0141-330-5184, email: J.Winfield@chem.gla.ac.uk). In reply please quote Ref. No: 157/TG. The University is committed to equality of opportunity in employment.



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Man v Machine: Kasparov will try to create uncomplicated positions where he has a strategic advantage

Defender of the human race

How much longer can the world's best chess player resist sheer computing power, asks **David Levy**

ON MAY 3, Garry Kasparov will sit down at a chessboard in Manhattan to defend humankind from the inexorable advance of artificial intelligence. His opponent will be a new generation of IBM's Deep Blue, the program that caused a sensation in Philadelphia last year when it crushed the World Champion in the first game of their match. "I was rightfully massacred," said an incredulous Kasparov after that game, yet he retained his composure and went on to win the match. Will he be so fortunate in New York?

To help answer this question, it is necessary to examine what happened in Philadelphia. In the first game, Kasparov threw caution to the wind and sacrificed a pawn, launching an attack against the program's king. As Kasparov explained after the game: "Any human being is uncomfortable feeling his king under pressure." But Deep Blue is inhuman and does not know the meaning of discomfort, so it gladly accepted Kasparov's sacrifice and then defended flawlessly before launching a devastating attack of its own. When Kasparov resigned, history was made. This was the first defeat of a reigning World Chess Champion by a program under tournament conditions.

What followed that momentous encounter was impressive to watch. Game by game, Kasparov learned more about the program's style of play and its weaknesses. He levelled the score in the second game, then made two draws and by the final game he was completely in control. And this knowledge forms the basis for his preparation for the match with "Deeper Blue", as the IBM team affectionately call the latest generation of their brainchild.

Computers, of course, have a huge in-built advantage in that they can evaluate some 200 million positions a second while, according to Dutch research in the 1950s, a Grandmaster averages about two a minute. Deep Blue routinely calculates every possible variation 10 moves ahead — and many further. But whereas computers have to plough through every variation in turn, humans can instantly recognise 99.9 per cent of them as nonsense. And pure calculation is only part of the story. Pattern recognition is at least as important. Computers can see much more, but humans know what to look for.

Kasparov will prove to be a very hard nut for the new version of Deep Blue to crack. He is clearly the best player who has ever lived and is currently on top form. Last December in Las Palmas, he won the strongest chess tournament of all time and pushed his official rating to the hitherto unseen height of 2820 (the average Grandmaster rates upwards of 2500 and Bobby Fischer at his best was only 2785).

Kasparov's opponent will also be much tougher than last year. The number of Deep Blue's dedicated chess chips working in parallel has been increased from 192 to 256. Each chip can generate a list of all the possible moves in a given position and evaluate how well it is doing in all the variations. And IBM has developed a program whose strength can only be guessed at.

Kasparov will be striving to keep the games relatively "simple", creating uncomplicated positions in which the underlying strategic features are all-important. In such positions, he can expect Deep Blue to have a poorer grasp than he does of what is really going on in the game, in which case Kasparov will be able, little by little, to increase his control of the board.

The IBM team will undoubtedly have revamped the program's repertoire of chess openings so that we can expect to see some complex and double-edged opening variations. If IBM's programmers have also managed to teach Deep Blue the art of creating complicated positions throughout the middle game, then Kasparov could find himself in serious trouble. Instead of being able to rely largely on intuition, the World Champion will be compelled, move after move, to solve tactical problems that require exact analysis.

Faced with an enormous amount of difficult analytical work, Kasparov may tire in the often crucial fourth hour of play. He may also run short of time on the chess clock and be compelled to move very rapidly. Under pressure like this, even the most superhuman of Grandmasters is prone to making a serious or even fatal tactical oversight.

The clash in New York offers much to both protagonists. Kasparov, already a multi-millionaire, will pick up $700,000 if he wins. But, more important to him, victory will once again vindicate his role as the final line of defence for humankind in the realm of intelligence. Even if Deep Blue crushes him, Kasparov will walk away richer by $400,000.

IBM isn't saying how much it has invested, but it brings a cornucopia of benefits. During last year's contest, the IBM Web site — http://www.chess.ibm.com/ — received 5 million hits a day. For the New York match, it expects around 12 million hits a day. The 1996 match generated worldwide media publicity for IBM with an estimated value of around $200 million. On the technical front, Deep Blue has enhanced the computer firm's knowledge of parallel processing, with direct benefits in solving everyday business problems.

Who will win in New York? If Kasparov is able to steer the games along relatively clear, strategic paths then I believe that his vastly superior understanding of the long-term issues on the chessboard will be the deciding factor. But if Deep Blue is able to muddy the waters, using unclear opening variations and creating enough complex and highly charged positions in each game to keep the World Champion under continual pressure, then Kasparov and the whole chess world may be in for a shock.

David Levy, an International Chess Master and former Scottish champion, is currently organising the first Mind Sports Olympiad (http://www.mindsports.co.uk), which will take place in London's Royal Festival Hall in August

Sporting cavalier

OBITUARY
Denis Compton

HAS there ever been a more coruscatingly entertaining, magnetic and all-round sportsman than Denis Charles Scott Compton? One who brought sheer joy into both football and cricket, who disdained the banal and the defensive, who actually enjoyed his sport?

Best known as a prolific batsman with an infinity of strokes, Compton, who has died aged 78, does not go down as one of the select few honoured by England internationally both at cricket and soccer. This is solely because he had the bad luck of having the heart torn out of his career by the war, in which he served with the Army Physical Training Corps, much of the time in India, where he even excelled at rugby.

But 1947 was his summer mirabilis at cricket. It seemed peculiarly appropriate that he should share it with Bill Edrich, his Middlesex "twin" who himself had been a talented outside-left with Tottenham Hotspur. Middlesex romped to the county championship. The batting order of Sid Brown, Jack Robertson, Edrich and Compton built the bridgehead for victory after victory in the County Championship. Both Compton and Edrich scored more than 3,000 runs in the competition, Compton ending the season with 3,816 runs and 18 centuries.

Outside-left was always Compton's position on the football field, from the moment he joined Arsenal in 1935. He had a formidably powerful left foot and delighted in ball jugglery. How well one remembers him one afternoon at Chelsea, not long back from India, when he whimsically balanced the ball a few times on his temple, before hooking a perfect centre over his head into the goalmouth. "Heads I Win, says Denis" read the Sunday paper headline next day. He had headed both goals in Arsenal's 2-1 win.

Denis was born in north London on May 23, 1918. There was no special athletic tradition in the family; Denis, however, was a prodigy, a Middlesex batsman and an Arsenal player at the age of 18.

Whether he was playing football or cricket, the essence of Compton's game was sheer enjoyment, which he abundantly communicated. In both sports he was unorthodox to a degree, though never to a fault. His unorthodoxy was underpinned by exceptional technique.

At bat, he delighted in scurrying down the wicket to attack even a good-length ball. The sweep to leg was a stroke he had honed to perfection; where others might have run risks he got runs. He was no less effective on the off side, where one of his specialities was to delay his shot before driving the ball square.

A right-handed batsman, he was in fact ambidextrous, bowling slow left arm in a variety of ways. His bowling was never in the same class as his batting, though on the days when he struck a length it could be formidable.

Altogether, he took 622 first class wickets at an average of 32.22 runs, and 25 Test wickets for an average of 56.40. That last statistic may sound unimpressive but it includes a remarkable five for 70 against South Africa in Cape Town on the 1948-49 MCC tour. His best figures came on the 1946-47 MCC tour of New Zealand against Auckland, when he took seven for 36.

Although he made his debut for Arsenal so early and continued to play for them on and off until 1950, he made only 54 League appearances for a mere 15 goals. Above all, he was a member of a brilliant England forward line, made up of Stanley Matthews, Raich Carter, Tommy Lawton, Jimmy Hagan and himself, which would surely have excelled even in official, peacetime, football. It reached its peak when it overwhelmed Scotland 8-0 in 1943.

Protracted trouble with his right knee inevitably cut down his effectiveness, not only as a batsman but as a dashing fielder, though he went on playing till the end of the 1957 season, having appeared in 78 Tests, scoring 5,807 runs, with 17 centuries, for an average of 50.06.

Compton made his Test debut in 1937 against New Zealand, making 65 runs. The following year, when the Australians came to England, he played in four Tests and made 214 runs, with one century, averaging 42.80. He had three Tests and an average of 63, including a century, against the West Indies.

After the war, he had a hugely successful 1946-47 Australian tour: 459 runs for an average of 51.9, with a century in each innings in the Adelaide Test. Alas, after 1947 his knee would henceforth never leave him without pain and difficulty. However, it did not stop him in 1948 scoring 145 not out at Old Trafford against Don Bradman's triumphant Australians, even though at one point in his innings he was knocked out by a ball from Ray Lindwall and temporarily had to retire hurt.

For many years after the war his handsome face appeared all over Britain in the celebrated Brylcreem advertisements. He wrote a column for the Sunday Express and commented on BBC television.



Compton: magnetic entertainer

Brian Glanville

Denis Compton, sportsman, born May 23, 1918; died April 23, 1997

Writer who put sex back into feminism

Katharine Viner meets Naomi Wolf, whose work attracts critics and new readers in equal measure

I AM sitting sipping tea and talking masturbation with Naomi Wolf. I have told her that we had a sex education video at my state school when I was 12, which imparted masturbation techniques for girls and boys. "Fantastic!" she enthuses. "Good God! You were so lucky! I'm delighted! I'm thrilled! Mindblowing! I'm really moved by what you've just told me."

It's the sort of enthusiastic discussion Wolf likes to have with women — her new book, Promiscuities, is all about women's search for erotic fulfilment — but my education, she says, is the best she has ever heard. It is more positive than the voices of her friends in the book, her friends with names like Dinah and Tonya who battled with being labelled "sluts" if they went too far, who worried about which "base" they could *go* to without being called easy, who were never given an erotic voice of their own. Wolf talks to these friends, with whom she grew up with in the Haight-Ashbury area of San Francisco in the 1970s, to try to work out how her society turns girls into women. And now she's here, and we're trying to see if our society operates in the same way.

It has always been a criticism of Wolf, and other American feminists, that they assume America means the world. In Britain the girls aren't called Tonya, they don't understand cheerleading, they don't sleep with frat boys, most of their mothers weren't reading The Second Sex in the delivery room. And the Haight is hardly Acacia Avenue. But Wolf, who spent four years studying in Oxford and Edinburgh, thinks there are important parallels between the two countries. "How we turn girls into women is a universal issue. I'd like to see an account of girls' development to womanhood in Britain. Because if it exists I haven't read it."

Why is it, I ask, that British feminism gets a media raw deal; that brilliant books by Linda Grant or Lynne Segal or Bea Campbell or Ros Coward can receive minimal media interest compared to her own two weeks this side of the Atlantic? "That I really can't figure out," she says, pale eyes wide. "Perhaps it is a deeply ingrained cultural reflex about containing feminism. Maybe it's safer to ignore your homegrown feminists, where they can *really* cause trouble, and import overseas feminists who you can then send home."

And perhaps it is something to do with the sexiness of her subject. (Her new book has a nude on its cover, no cellulite, nice hard nipples, a little armpit hair to add danger; this, and her assertion that "We are all bad girls", should stop Camille Paglia calling her Little Miss Pravda.) And her adept employment of media-savvy soundbites such as "You can have breasts *and* use footnotes". How important is the accessibility of her books? "Well, I'm not embarrassed to talk about intimate, emotional subjects in a language that a smart 15-year-old could understand," she says. "That makes my books accessible, but they are rigorous too."

Many believe her appearance has something to do with it. Like Gloria Steinem before her, Wolf is seen as the feminist babe, the one with the luscious, flicky long hair, the wide eyes, the I-love-men lifestyle. "For God's sake, I'm 34 years old, I'm a mom, I'm a college teacher. People don't read my books because of my personality, but for the content that I've been sitting on my butt for years to create." It might help her get media attention, though. "That is a sexist thing to say," she says. "Either you are too ugly to be taken seriously or you are too pretty to be taken seriously. It's a standard way of shooting down feminists. I know how my readers respond to my books, and that is not a media construct."

Indeed, even Wolf's fiercest critics acknowledge that she has brought new readers to feminism. Young women who would never label themselves with the f-word have taken an interest, particularly in her first book, 1990's The Beauty Myth, about the way in which society conditions women to conform to a certain look. It was an international bestseller and sold in 14 countries. But many found the book derivative, claiming that it failed to acknowledge the work of the First and Second Wave feminists who had gone before.

Much of Wolf's work is sourced in her personal experience. Her teenage anorexia informed much of The Beauty Myth; her time as adviser to Dick Morris, he of the Clinton administration, was linked with her second book, Fire With Fire, a treatise on women and power; when she got married, she wrote an article in Cosmopolitan about her wedding dress; when she got pregnant, she wrote an article in the New Republic about how she was now "passionately more pro-choice, but we should encourage women to have their abortions early because it's a grave decision". To write Promiscuities now, when self-revelation is what is selling books — from Elizabeth Wurtzel's Prozac Nation to Kathryn Harrison's The Kiss — is clever timing. But there is a danger here. As Joan Smith says, "Wolf's account of her own sexual history is rather pedestrian but it reinforces the impression . . . that her most compelling subject is herself."

Why does she rely on personal experience to such an extent, as if a lone happening for her has relevance for all? "Male writers from Norman Mailer to Edmund White write at great length about their lives, but no one ever says that men's personal experience is a suspect source," she says. "There's a literary double standard there. The mistake is to restrict your work to personal experience. My books always broaden out, quite rigorously, to the social, the political, the material."

What about the accusation that the sexual experiences she relates are rather tame by most women's standards? "Well, I know my readers are saying it's brave, and I trust my readers," she says. "The emotional truths that make a deep impression on girls are not about how big his dick was or he fucked me this way or that. What resonates are the moments that crystallise — like, oh, this is what gender relations are about, or, oh, this is what it's like to be a woman. What matters to women about sex is not technicalities, it's about consciousness, it's about how to grow."

She is by no means your anti-male candidate; in fact her proclamations on men might shame Barbara Cartland. "Male sexual attention is the sun in which I bloom," she writes. "The male body is ground and shelter to me, my life-long destination." She even says — believe this if you will — "I have seen the word 'love' trigger an erection." She is married, blissfully, to David Shipley, a speechwriter for the Clinton administration — "an egalitarian, nurturing man" — and they have a two-year-old daughter, Rosa. Having a child, she says, has made her more radical. It's one of the motivations behind Promiscuities. "I want the shit that happens to women to stop. I want my daughter to grow up free. I want no girl ever again to get a negative message about her sexuality." But they will do, I say. It will happen in spite of her new book. "Right, but at least I've done my bit. At least I can rest easy and say I've done all I can."


Wolf: 'I want my daughter to grow up free' PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID SILLITOE

Promiscuities by Naomi Wolf is published by Chatto at £12.99

The talk of the gown

OBITUARY
Jean Louis

JEAN LOUIS, who has died aged 89, clothed 60 movies and a president's wife, but the double-whammy dress of his career was that black satin sheath enfolding parts of Rita Hayworth as she put over "Put the Blame on Mame" in Gilda, 1946.

"That dress seemed marvellous from the first moment I thought of it," he said long after, when it was a major motion picture frock on exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum, New York. "Rita made it sexy because of the casualness with which she wore it. There was something voluptuous about her ease."

He had been in Hollywood for only two years when he created it, although he had designed for off-duty stars (and the Duchess of Windsor) since his arrival in New York in 1935 on a speculative trip from his native Paris.

Another flattered client was Mrs Harry Cohn, wife to the Columbia Pictures studio chief; by the 1940s, Columbia was big and rich enough to afford expensive female talent and need a permanent designer. Cohn heeded his wife, hired Louis and rewarded him with full-card credits "Gowns by Jean Louis".

He earned it. Costume designers were then responsible for amending a star's image without help from a personal trainer or computer correction of the frame. Hayworth had just had a baby — and so a bulge — when Gilda was shot. Louis couldn't cinch her in a girdle as she had to dance; so a tight tie flattens her stomach, then flows into a bow as loosely sensual as her tumbling hair. And the strapless top is upkept, not with bones, which would have snapped, but with flame-moulded plastic bars.

Stars trusted Louis, who had an intelligent sympathy with women and never treated them as a slab of meat. As independent production overtook studio output, many specified Louis should be their designer.

Louis remembered their vulnerabilities with kindness. This informed his work on the Judy Garland vehicle A Star is Born, and when finally he won an Oscar, in 1956, it was for cherishing Judy Holliday in The Solid Gold Cadillac.

Later, Louis opened his own Los Angeles couture house: Nancy Reagan wore his black Jacquard dress the night Ronald was elected president in 1980. It was less chilly than the vast wardrobe she later ordered from senior US couturiers, but it was quite unlike other gala garments Louis had constructed for the greats — notably for Marlene Dietrich's cabaret tours. Dietrich was then in her 60s, with formidable acuity about self-presentation; she and Louis invented gowns in that theatre/cinema fabric, nude soufflé as sheer as stockings if cut skilfully, suggesting nubile flesh. He added only the beads called brilliants. Dietrich seemed to glide on to the stage naked but for points of light, as alluring as at her prime.

But the second most famous frock of his career was in a similar fashion. Louis worked with Marilyn Monroe on her last films; he waited at her house for an hour for a first fitting "and finally she came out of her bedroom, wearing a bathrobe. She threw it open and said, 'I thought you should see what you have to work with.' She had nothing on underneath."

She begged him to outfit her for John Kennedy's birthday party in Madison Square Garden in May 1962, which Vogue empress Diana Vreeland described as "the last moment of the myth generated by Hollywood — glamour, glitter and romance". The party's producer, Jean Dalrymple, had asked Monroe to be careful what she wore.

Dalrymple went to her dressing room beforehand, and "there she was in this modest little gown with no bareness at all. It even had a neck and sleeves." It was tight — Monroe was sewn into it — but innocuous. Then Monroe went out on stage and, said Dalrymple, "it melted away". Monroe squeaked Happy Birthday apparently clad only in rhinestones.

Veronica Horwell

Jean Louis Berthault, designer, born October 5, 1907; died April 20, 1997


Rita Hayworth in Gilda (1946)

Tomb find lights up dark ages

Owen Bowcott

A GRAVE unearthed in a Northamptonshire gravel quarry has revealed the remains of a Saxon princeling and shed fresh light on the history of Britain's Dark Ages.

The tomb's other contents — an iron-crested helmet, a steel sword and a bronze hanging bowl — have been described as the most significant finds of the decade.

Archaeologists, working at the site near Wellingborough for the past 18 months, had already uncovered traces of a Roman vineyard capable of producing 15,000 bottles of white wine a year. The latest find probably dates from around AD 650, long after tribes of invading Angles had overpowered the previous Romano-Celtic civilisation.

Ian Meadows, the site director, said discovering the vineyard was "exciting enough. But for those of us used to spending long periods on back-breaking excavations, with little to show for our efforts, finding an Anglo-Saxon helmet as well within a relatively short period of time was a huge reward."

The rusted helmet has a nose guard and crescent-shaped cheek protectors. It has a crest in the form of a boar. Only three similar helmets have been found.

The Northamptonshire finds were spotted during a metal-detecting survey of the quarry, which has been subsidised by the Australian developers Pioneer Aggregates, who are to pay for conservation of the helmet, sword and bowl.

Anthony Read, antiquities conservator at Leicester City Museums, said: "The sword is a superb piece of craftsmanship. Steel was very difficult to produce then.

"It is highly patterned and was kept in a wool-lined scabbard, the remains of which were still present. The lanolin from the fleece would have kept the blade greased."

The identity of the high caste warrior may never emerge from his decayed remains, but the quality of the pagan artefacts around him have already enabled archaeologists to begin reconstructing his times. From their quality it is clear that he was a tribal leader, perhaps an aristocrat or junior prince.

An artist's impression of the helmet PHOTOGRAPH: RAYMONDS PRESS AGENCY

Letter from Uzbekistan Jennifer Balfour

Of great import

THIS month my salary could just about run to three pillows or two cans of white gloss paint. We need both, but one will have to wait. I'm not sure what we are waiting for, though. At home you wait and the prices go down. Here you wait and they rocket.

We're currently in the midst of more price madness. A bad harvest and mass exports of cotton for foreign exchange have brought sugar, flour and oil back on ration after a three-year respite. When they are available in the market they are prohibitive. Every few months prices go wild while salaries make feeble attempts to catch up.

To appear poor in Uzbekistan is the worst humiliation, and people will bankrupt themselves to outdo each other in hospitality and clothe their new brides in the latest fashions from Saudi Arabia. Incredibly enough, people manage and the shows of wealth get more obscene every day.

A popular Uzbek joke has it that Presidents Clinton, Yeltsin and Karimov were comparing notes. Americans survive on $2,000 a month with a little to spare, while Russians just about cope on $100. Uzbeks, however, according to Karimov, are given $10 a month but are left with $100. And it seems to be true.

Uzbekistan, as a Muslim buffer state, was always protected from the shortages and queues of much of the Soviet bloc, and communism's passing is deeply lamented. Amid the gradual easing of state subsidies after independence in 1991, the free-market system was quickly launched. It became every man for himself. Anyone with two suitcases and a relative in Turkey or Iran could become a "biznis man". The first signs that our life would never be the same again came in the summer of 1993 when cubes of foreign chewing gum appeared for the first time at the feet of fledgling entrepreneurs. We knew then that the "importney" revolution was here to stay.

Beautifully packaged biscuits arrived from Turkey and gritty Ulker chocolate in psychedelic Cellophane. Every now and again a job-lot of out-of-date ground coffee or slabs of Suchard chocolate would be gobbled up in an instant only for the odd bar to reappear around the city in ensuing months.

At about the same time commercials appeared on television: a glorious, sensual, paradisiacal mélange of beautiful people and exotic foreign products were set to catchy tunes that all of a sudden everyone was singing. Children cut their first words on Mars and Snickers, evidence that multinationals were pushing the frontiers of remote Central Asia. A month's salary could buy only two or three bars, but the message was that if you really loved your children you'd find the money from somewhere. Bounty chocolate bars, Uncle Ben's rice and Colgate toothpaste followed quickly with equal sales fervour and it seemed that e-numbers, brand names and packaging strewn over once empty streets were here to stay.

Brazilian powdered-drink sachets soon replaced locally bottled homogeneous juice, transforming the salty water into fruity nectar that stained lips and tongues vitriolic reds and greens. But once Coca-Cola — the Karimov family business — hit the streets in "throwaway" plastic litre bottles last summer, America had made its mark more than Santa Barbara ever could.

JOINT-VENTURE frying pans, toilet brushes, slabs of marble and electronic gadgets come and go as the foreigners battle with the country's impossible bureaucracy, but there is money to be made if you can find the right palm to grease and plenty who will spend it. Every now and again Karimov lampoons illegal traders and neighbouring countries who are bleeding Uzbekistan's fragile foreign reserves. In a fit of pique the other day he set fire to a pile of Turkish biscuits on TV to demonstrate something that everyone is still trying to fathom. But I stood in a queue for an hour for government oil last week. The black, foul-smelling pesticide-permeated treacle squeezed from the cotton seed is almost as sacred to Uzbeks as their bread. I left when it became apparent that there were more people in front of me than when I started. Refined, joint-venture cotton oil at three times the price stood unmoving on a shelf behind us. I would save 20 pence on my 400-gram ration if I waited three more hours, but decided on balance to go for "importney". I left the pensioners, invalids and decent honest people behind in the queue.

The joke may be true for some, but there are still many who, unlike me, have no one to bail them out.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

WHAT actually is the oldest trick in the book?

PRETENDING to have read the book. — *Bruce Bennett, Vancouver, Canada*

SURELY the trick played on Eve by the serpent is the oldest trick in The Book. — *Tony Bon, Maple Falls, Washington, USA*

THE TRICK turned by the first practitioner of the oldest profession in the world. — *Martin Attwood, Italy*

DO women readers tend to read female authors?

RECLAIMING our literary heritage began in the seventies, and many female writers described spiritual awakenings in regard to what it means to be a "woman".

Women's experiences cannot be universally defined and many female authors are more interested in story-telling without investing personal experience into the narrative. However, it will always remain more satisfying to read a description of a woman's life by a female author rather than a male. — *Anna Walker, Swaythling, Southampton*

I WRITE action-packed thrillers, generally thought to be a male preserve, but around half my readers are female. My stories are violent, but contain plenty of romance, little sex, deal with serious issues, and have strong female characters. The question, therefore, is which features attract women; or whether, in fact, both sexes respond to pretty much the same things. — *Daniel Easterman, Newcastle upon Tyne*

"HAPLOGRAPHY" is "the inadvertent writing *once* of what should have been written twice". Is this the most useless word in the English language?

IN Chambers English dictionary, there is this entry: *taghairm*, n, divination; esp. inspiration sought by lying in a bullock's hide behind a waterfall. — *Ray Hand, Abingdon, Oxfordshire*

AS a calligraphy teacher, I find the word haplography useful. When concentrating on producing good letter-forms it is easy to make mistakes such as writing "rember" instead of "remember". Its opposite is dittography: the writing twice of what should have been written once, such as "critics" becoming "crititics". There is also the homoeoteleuton, in which, when copying, the eye returns to the same word but in a different place — either omitting words in between or repeating words already written. — *Susan Moor, Sunderland*

FRANCE gave the United States the Statue of Liberty to commemorate 100 years of independence. What, if anything, did the US give France?

TENS of thousands of GI graves from Omaha Beach to the Rhine River. — *David Johnson, Sydney, Nova Scotia, Canada*

LE Big Mac. — *Sebastian Dovey, Hong Kong*

JESSYE NORMAN singing the Marseillaise at the bicentenary of the French Revolution in 1989 is a start. — *Martin Roberts, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA*

Any answers?

WHY is a country called by its inhabitants Shqiptari known to the rest of the world as Albania? — *Alan Keenlyside, Thornton, Lancashire*

WHEN my young children asked where they were before they were in mummy's tummy I could only come up with "Nowhere". Does anyone have a more satisfactory answer? — *Andrew Weltch, Cardiff*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ

A Country Diary

Veronica Heath

NORTHUMBERLAND: Twelve thousand puffins, having wintered somewhere in the Atlantic, are now back on Coquet Island. The Venerable Bede records that it was used as a conference centre by the monks. Today it is a favourite nesting ground for seabirds, particularly eider ducks. The first sandmartins and sandwich terns are back on the foreshore at Low Hauxley, and the Northumberland Wildlife Trust warden, Jim Martin, reports that for the first time in years there are 200 knots. There is a local belief that the knot is so called from its call-note and by others that it is a derivative of King Canute, who, history tells, failed to prevent an incoming tide. Certainly, if you stand to watch these plump, grey waders they do give the impression of daring the incoming waves to advance. Walking the foreshore I find that many of the waders acquire a cloak of invisibility when standing motionless. Oystercatchers, perfectly bold and black on the wing, are difficult to pick out if they are standing on rocks near the breaking surf. Their piebald plumage blends into the background of rock and white water. Redshank, dunlin and ringed plover are also expert at this camouflage. The weather is mild and sunny but we have had storms and there is a variety of shapes and sizes of seaweed and assorted washed-up pieces of salt-impregnated wood. Also pathetic remains of a half-picked small wader carcass at which gulls and corbies have been busy.

Democracy for some

THEATRE
Michael Billington

BRECHT'S plays have been consistently undermined in Britain by the hierarchical structure of British theatre. But one of the great things about Simon McBurney's production of **The Caucasian Chalk Circle**, staged at London's National Theatre in collaboration with Théâtre de Complicité until June 18, is that it feels exhilaratingly democratic.

In part this is because of the conversion of the Olivier into an in-the-round space. With the circle blocked off and the stage overhung by Tim Hatley's silken canvas, on to which images are projected, it feels like an intimate indoor circus — Brecht meets Bertram Mills. The sense of a democratic experience is enhanced by the multi-roled casting, so that Juliet Stevenson turns up as the fugitive Archduke as well as Grusha, and McBurney's own Azdak emerges from the ensemble.

The collapse of communism is supposed to have left Brecht and his plays dead as a dodo. But The Chalk Circle, which was written between 1943 and 1945, still works — partly because it is a piece of epic story-telling and partly because it asks fundamental questions. Who should own what? Is possession nine-tenths of the law? It poses these questions through the story of the servant-girl Grusha, who rescues a Georgian governor's baby son and then has to face the claims of the natural mother for the child's return.


Juliet Stevenson eschews heroic pathos for unquenchable instinct

Brecht's main point — "What there is should belong to those who are good for it" — remains as subversive as ever.

His parable is presented here with just the right visual economy. The famous alienation-effect even comes into the play through the presentation of the governor's son: what we see is a stage-baby whose mewling sounds are made by a black-masked operator.

Juliet Stevenson rightly eschews heroic pathos and plays Grusha excellently as a tough, gritty peasant woman driven to do good by some unquenchable instinct. But it is a company show: with this superbly democratic production, Complicité have staked their own claim to the transformed Olivier stage.

Nothing is harder to recreate than the sense of shock. But even if Alfred Jarry's **King Ubu**, which caused pandemonium at its Paris premiere in 1896, is now a cultural icon rather than a sensational novelty, its lunatic grotesquerie is brilliantly caught in the revival at London's Gate theatre.

It is what you might call an "in your face" production: the audience sits round two sides of designer David Roger's long table through whose apertures actors appear and disappear like jacks-in-the-box. At different times the table becomes a food-festooned banquet, the stage for the monstrous Ubu's usurpation of the Polish throne and a battlefield in which Ubu's forces are routed by the bog-roll-throwing Russians.

Jarry's anarchic satire inevitably takes on different meanings in different societies. Here it seems a mix of classical parody and surreal farce anticipating avant-garde art as well as the Goons and Monty Python. But the production also goes all out for antic physical comedy: at one point Ubu's tortured henchman, Dogpile, is mercilessly elongated so that his head appears at one end of the table and his feet at the other.

Jarry's play is presented at the Gate as part of a season of European satire; but even if its attack on bourgeois greed and cruelty has been blunted by time, the work lives on through its madcap inventiveness. Armies march across the table to the raspberry-blowing sound of kazoos. Joanna Holden's monstrously padded Pa Ubu bestows ermine-lined toilet seats on her courtiers and terrifies others by instructing them to "piss in your pants".

Jarry may have been motivated by a hatred of authority figures and the arrogance of power, but his art, as this exuberantly nihilist production testifies, clearly belonged to Dada.


Stephen Derrick and Chantal Donaldson of Phoenix in Covering Ground PHOTOGRAPH: STEVE HANSON

Enough of the B-word

Thea Barnes runs Britain's leading black dance company. But it's best not to describe it that way, writes **Judith Mackrell**

EVER since Phoenix was formed 15 years ago by three black guys from Leeds, it has shouldered the burden of being Britain's showcase modern black dance group. With its high media profile and relatively generous state funding, it has come to symbolise a haven for black dancers in a white-dominated profession, a draw for black audiences and proof of the Arts Council's political correctness. Although its directors have tried to protest that it's just a dance company, although its repertory has never been dictated by black issues, and although it has even employed white dancers, Phoenix can't seem to escape being typecast. And according to Thea Barnes, the company's new artistic director, "That sucks."

Barnes has an impeccable CV, having spent most of her performing career with the great companies of Alvin Ailey and Martha Graham. She has the physical authority of a fabulously trained dancer and she talks with as much confidence as she moves, combining the deliberation of a PhD student with the street cred of one who learnt her politics at the height of Black Power.

But when she starts describing the complexities and frustrations of taking on a black dance company and its political baggage, she breaks into a heavy Chicago drawl and a vivid, wise-cracking routine. "I mean," her shrug wallows in sarcasm, "what *is* black? In America you're not even allowed to use the word any more. When I went to Northwestern University recently and asked for some books on black dance, the receptionist was like . . ." — she mimes a duchessy double-take — 'We don't use that term here.' I went, 'Whoah, faux pas, excuse me!' " — hands warding off social disgrace — " 'Well, do you have anything on African or African American dance?'

"In America black people have decided that the word doesn't take on board who they they really are. And that's right. Look at me — my grandfather's father was Scottish, his mother was Carib-Indian, and, march on down, my great grandmother on my mother's side was white."

Patently aware of all the complications the B-word brings with it, she doesn't pretend to have a rigid policy about the way her new company should be perceived. She insists her first loyalty "will be to dance and dance only. I want Phoenix to be freed from the burden of having to explain our politics every time we discuss our work. I want us be judged as part of the whole continuum of modern dance, not as something in a box on its own."

Yet at the same time she acknowledges that Phoenix has grown out of what she calls the British black experience, and this is central to who the dancers are. She also admits, "I have to be a realist. Phoenix is one of the few companies where African Caribbean dancers can find a job in this country." So although she wants her repertory to reflect the full range of contemporary movement, she is also very open to choreographers who might want to work with an African-based dance language or deal with black issues.

She won't set her face against hiring white dancers either. "We have 10 dancers right now; I'd like 14 or 15. And I'm interested in good dancers, full stop. Phoenix has had white dancers before, and though it's important we remain true to our identity, we are not a platform for reverse racism."

Reverse racism is something Barnes is very wary of, fearing that problems can arise when bodies such as the Arts Council target funds to disadvantaged artists. "There's a political feel-good factor involved, but it can marginalise the work even further."

For Barnes, the most radical direction black dance can take is for artists to produce high-class work and get recognised for it — without being obliged to talk about their colour.

The discipline Graham imposed on her dancers stayed with Barnes. She always used to do her Graham warm-up exercises and was shocked when other dancers sauntered in just before the curtain and commented unbelievingly, "You still doin' your Graham floor, girl?"

Barnes would say, "Yes, I'm still doin' my Graham floor," and under her direction so will Phoenix's dancers. By insisting on high standards, Barnes wants to give the company the freedom to dance all they're capable of dancing and to express all there is to express about being dancers who happen to be black.

Rattle dazzling in Fantastic Symphony

CLASSICAL MUSIC
Andrew Clements

***SIMON RATTLE* has conducted the three leading European orchestras, the Royal Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Berlin Philharmonic and the Vienna Philharmonic, but it is with the Vienna that he has struck up a special rapport. A British audience had its first chance last week to sample how good a partnership that has become when Sir Simon conducted the final concert of the Philharmonic's three Royal Festival Hall visits this season.**

Their programme of Haydn, Richard Strauss and Berlioz was one he might have conducted with his Birmingham orchestra at any time over the past 10 years. Haydn symphonies have become a regular part of his music-making, and as a member of the generation that has grown up with period instruments he has applied the lessons of authenticity to his symphony orchestra performances. With a group that cherishes its traditions as jealously as the Vienna Phil that is always going to be a tall order, but in Symphony No 70 he had the timpanist using hard sticks, and the scaled-down string section playing with a minimum of vibrato in the slow movement. What gave the performance wiry buoyancy, though, was the rhythmic detail, the perfect dovetailing of lines and the transparency of every texture.

Strauss's Metamorphosen for 23 solo strings positively demands the succulence that the Haydn went out of its way to play down; it's a piece that was written with the sound of the central European tradition in mind. This wasn't the most moving of performances — Sir Simon concentrated on the intricate web of lines, and on plotting a sure course through its architecture, even if that meant keeping the piece at arm's length.

Neither work in the first half, though, was any kind of preparation for the overwhelming tumult that he unleashed in the Fantastic Symphony.

It was a performance of titanic proportions, in which Sir Simon delighted in the players' capacity to realise Berlioz's thesaurus of instrumental effects in a dazzling, larger-than-life way. With the lower strings providing an ominous Wagnerian undertow and the woodwind deep-etching every line, the performance was balanced on a knife edge between exultation and despair; the changes of mood in the first movement were registered with almost hysterical vividness, the Ball Scene skipped by without pausing for breath, the March to the Scaffold was screwed up to an almost unbearable intensity, and the final Witches' Sabbath led off at a pace that hardly seemed possible.

Yet the reading was revelatory as well as exciting. Sir Simon's ability to bring out detail without obviously spotlighting it was a constant source of amazement. Here, with a British conductor and an Austrian orchestra, the greatest of all French orchestral scores seemed utterly reborn.

Stuart Jeffries on the legacy of Thatcher's generation of short-termist, marketing-obsessed shock artists

Tragic hedonism

WHENEVER the vigour of British art in the nineties is trumpeted from the covers of patriotic glossies or cited by surprised American magazines, the same names, the same images crop up. Liam Gallagher's two fingers, Silly Spice's trussed-up torso, Alexander McQueen's bare bottoms, a still from Trainspotting, Damien Hirst's viscera, Tracey Emin and Sarah Lucas's self-referential, sex-soaked oeuvres.

The same names, the same images and one dominant narrative: British art is high on its own vulgarity, tripping on its own coarseness, unable or unwilling to muster the patience necessary for quiet contemplation, or to allow space to those who want to evade its tyrannous, well-marketed rule.

Even the theatre wants to get in on the act. Playwrights, especially the young and the spunky, have become obsessed with bawling their self-conscious coarseness in their titles: Shopping And Fucking, I Licked A Slag's Deodorant, More E Vicar? (The last one remains to be written, but it is surely only a matter of time). And even when the titles are less than incendiary, writers self-frustratingly try to shock a jaded audience: in The Censor, currently on show in London, a woman squats and leaves what we hope is a plastic turd on the stage. Opera, not to be left out, had its ludicrous pneumatic Rhine maidens.

To slice up a cow's carcass may indeed be shocking but makes for savvy, easily-marketed art

This culture, though we must try to understand how it has arisen, is oppressive. It's one where those who shout loudest, who plunder their lives for material most assiduously and basely, those who swear as though they've got Tourette's, are feted. There is a rapidly diminishing return to artistic shock tactics: boredom is now the only authentic emotion to be felt on experiencing most vulgar art, though feigned outrage is the most likely to be expressed.

How did vigorous vulgarity become the norm? A hint comes from a recent article by Mark Riding in the New York Times. He contended that Margaret Thatcher imposed a Darwinian order on the arts, forcing new creative talents to stand on their own. "By promoting economic policies that widened the gap between the rich and poor, she gave visual artists, movie-makers and playwrights 'something to protest' about," says Riding.

There may indeed be a new Darwinian order, but it is not characterised by protest. Think of two of the most popular mutations on the British art scene, Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin. Successful in a Darwinian sense, one has gained fame from plundering the abattoirs, the other from parading her sexual history. To slice up a cow's carcass, to list one's lovers in a putative work of art, may indeed be shocking and vulgar, but makes for savvy pieces of easily marketed artworks. These are the true cultural products of Thatcherism.

Even though Thatcherite economic policies undoubtedly tore at the nation's social fabric, it's laughably reductive to say that the recent explosion in British artistic talent is to do with political protest.

It is typical of a culture that the critic Robert Hewison has called "tragically hedonist", one that is too self-absorbed to protest, one that, chiefly for its own perceived psychic well-being, opts out of straight society into a doomed world of pleasure. "Society invents a spurious convoluted logic tae absorb and change people whae's behaviour is outside the mainstream," says a character in Irvine Welsh's novel Trainspotting. "Suppose that ah ken aw the pros and cons, know that ah'm gaunnae huv a short life, am ay sound mind etcetera, etcetera, but still want tae use smack? They won't let ye dae it, because it's seen as a sign ay thir failure." But the point about this, to the extent that it is a political protest, is that it is feeble.

This tragic hedonism can also be seen in house music or in more traditional pop bands such as Suede, where alienated decadence is all. Their current single, Lazy, pits working-class commitment against youthful enervation: "Uncle Teds and their legendary vests/ helping out around the disabled./ From the flats and the maisonette, they're reminding us there's things to be done./ But you and me all we want to be is lazy./ You and me, so lazy."

But even to write this way seems fogeyish, snobbish. Avant-garde art is necessarily transgressive, condemned to be misunderstood and reviled at first; and working-class expression is naturally disturbing to middle-class sensibilities. On the first point, no doubt it is true that much avant-garde British art is reviled, but what is chiefly shocking about it is how limited its range of expression is, and how inoffensive, even dull, it is to experience.

On the second point, that criticising vulgarity is snobbish, the argument is this: vulgarity is a term used as a middle-class rebuke to working-class culture. Thatcher, so the New York Times story goes, drove the underclass to express itself with all the verbal violence at its command. Hence any criticism of this violence is perceived as rightwing and repressive. It needn't be that way.

True, there is a rightwing critique of vulgarity, and not just in art. Symptomatic of this is a book published last year called Gentility Recalled: "Mere" Manners And The Making Of Social Order. Edited by Digby Anderson and published by the Social Affairs Unit, with all the horror that implies, the book is a conservative shopping list. Chapter headings include Being A Lady: The Protection Of Courtesy; Knowing Your Place; Running A Respectable Household.

In the book's foreword, Bryan Wilson, Emeritus Fellow of All Souls, writes disparagingly of the entertainment industry, advertising and the media: "Concern not to give offence, once a guiding maxim . . . has been replaced by the desire to shock, to dare and to be noticed. Primitive impulses are played upon and stimulated, and the feast of misrule, once the regulated and very occasional safety-valve of an ordered society, becomes the veritable (dis)order of the day. A modern play, novel, comedy sketch or broadcast makes almost mandatory use of what was once 'bad language'."

But this critique, which relies on a convincing diagnosis, calls for a return to values which many may despise. Moreover, it fails to take into account the historical circumstances that produced such a culture. One of those circumstances, as the New York Times realised, is the effect of Thatcherism — not just in unleashing a particular mode of commercially astute and vulgar expression, but in introducing a culture of short termism in the arts, where quick profits and cheap shocks are all. "Disengaged, uncommitted and preoccupied with liquidity, the financial system has been uniquely bad at supporting investment and innovation," writes Will Hutton in The State We're In. As for finance, so for art.

Even the trend of producing shocking art to do with the body becomes less able to shock as it becomes more like a decadent fixation. Sculptor Anthony-Noel Kelly may have been arrested on suspicion of stealing human remains for use in his work, but it is hard to get worked up about his project aesthetically. The Sunday Times may have ranted that "even in the avant-garde world of 'shock art' there must surely be limits," but the point is not that there are limits, but that the constant transcending of them is jaded and jading.

What we need is a critique not so much of vulgarity, but of its ubiquity and its tyranny, one that understands Thatcherism's role in producing this coarseness, but also distinguishes vulgarity from "dumbing down", and one that expresses that the shock of vulgarity in 1997 is that it is no longer shocking. One that doesn't so much demand the smelling salts when vulgarity is proffered, but rather asks: "Is that all there is?"







We are not amused . . . (from top) Jake and Dinos Chapman's Satyr, complete with penises for horns; a still from the film of Irvine Welsh's Trainspotting; the pneumatic Rhine maidens in the Royal Opera House's Ring Cycle; and Helen Chadwick with her piss flowers

Laugh? I nearly died

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

***MARIANNE FAITHFULL* was talking to *Selina Scott* (Sky One) about a friend called Harry. Harry had trouble with his teeth and died. As he lay there in his coffin there was an earthquake, "and the coffin fell down in a crack and was never found again".**

I freely concede I was watching Selina by mistake. I thought she was snooker. So the whole experience feels somewhat dream-like. What Marianne was on and where can I get some (See me. Ed), whether the dentist is still practising or has he got the hang of it now . . . did the undertaker charge for his services in such sad circumstances? All these are questions I'd like to leave in the air. They seem to belong there.

Harry had an striking send-off even by Californian standards. I must mention it to Helen Richards, who produced and directed *The End* (Modern Times, BBC2), an up-close account of the different ways we dispose of our dead.

The mechanics of embalming and cremation were scrupulously explained. It is the pink dye in formaldehyde which makes the corpse look so rosy and cremated bones are pulverised with ball bearings.

Anthony, a bloke with a beard, was painting wavy lines on a cardboard coffin. His Aunt Marcella had not precisely said she wanted a cardboard coffin but he was sure she'd get a kick out of it. He was a man of strong opinions.

The coffin had to be assembled like a DIY wardrobe and with much the same results. A certain nervousness was apparent in the congregation but Anthony's rousing valediction gave them something else to think about.

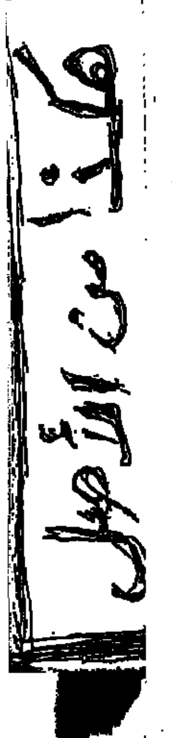
"Her happiest time," he said, "was a few years in London but her mother prevailed on her to come back to stultifying Belfast. She hated her boring, badly-paid clerical work and poor conditions. She was the most intelligent and only artistic member of her tribe but nobody saw it or, if they did, they squashed it. When she died she still had all her teeth."

This seemed calculated to annoy absolutely everyone except her dentist.

Three cheerful London women wanted all the trimmings. "You can't beat Barry of Bermondsey. If I lived to be 100, I wouldn't go nowhere else. He don't care what traffic's behind you. Everything stops. When I go, I want them to have a good drink, a jolly up, just like we've always been used to."

With murmurings and sighs two daughters dressed their dead father in the suit he wore at their weddings. "Shall he have a vest or not?" "It is winter." "His watch?" "He'll not need it."

James Lees-Milne said, "God should have arranged for dying people to disintegrate. There are many other scraps of advice I would have given him." Lees-Milne is 88. I can feel God flinch.



The longest trial in British history is run from the tiny McLibel headquarters PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM TURNER

Power, corruption and fries

Michael Mansfield

Counter Culture vs Burger Culture
by John Vidal
Macmillan 324pp £15.99

THE MOST significant point about this book is that it has been written at all. The McLibel trial has received remarkably little publicity given its importance, and John Vidal has been one of the few journalists to accord it time and space. It is as if a *cordon sanitaire* has been placed around it by the media, who have been singularly lacking in the courage shown by Helen Steel and Dave Morris (the co-authors) to stand up to the threat of legal action by McDonald's over a leaflet which criticised the company for promoting junk food and exploiting workers, animals and the environment. There are still many in Britain, and even more in the United States, who have never heard of the trial, let alone the issues behind it.

It is unquestionably a landmark trial, not only because it is the longest in British history but also because it scrutinises the moral fabric of post-war Western society and the manner in which non-accountable multinational corporations exercise more power over our daily lives than individual domestic governments. In essence, it charts the demise of democracy in ways that have been insidious and imperceptible. It is ironic that even as the obvious barriers to democratic expression have been tumbling throughout Europe, they have been supplanted by a tangled web of capitalist enterprise with a clear objective of world domination.

The strands of that web, stretched out during the trial, are clearly and cogently defined and described in this book. All of them touch every minute of our waking lives: health and diet; nutrition; Third World poverty; environmental destruction; animal welfare (conditions of both life and death); human welfare (working conditions, both economic and physical); packaging, waste and advertising; state collusion and spying; and last, but by no means least, freedom and the right to free speech.

These matters clearly illustrate the ambit that has not been encompassed by any other litigation and has not been coherently put on record in any other form. This is an essential part of current history and should be obligatory reading for all responsible citizens. When one considers that all of this has been mounted by two young people without the resources of a $24 billion per annum corporation, and without an eminent team of lawyers to represent them throughout, this is no mean achievement. The book is both a tribute and a testimonial to their efforts on our behalf.

While a narrative of this kind can often be worthy but tedious, this particular work does not fall into that trap. It is careful in its analysis, assiduous in its attention to detail and compelling in its description of the personal sacrifice made by the many individuals who were prepared to stand up and be counted.

In a sense Helen and Dave are very much part of a latter-day movement that is increasingly gathering support across the generations, and which has as its main objective the preservation and conservation of basic human values and resources.

To some extent, Dave Morris sees societal change from without, whereas Helen Steel sees the change from within, but this argument may be scholastic and redundant, because at the end of the day there is a common cause which concerns the very nature of the planet we are going to bequeath to future generations. The particular judicial decision arising in their case is irrelevant, because the material that has been put in the public arena is so significant that it should provide a firm basis for discussion and decision on a wider scale.

The decision, when it arrives in June or later, may have immediate and obvious legal ramifications, but it is divested of communal authority by the denial of trial by jury. Without doubt, it is the fairest and most democratic form of trial. Without doubt, it poses the greatest threat to both the actual and perceived reins of power held by the establishment. Decisions by juries have consistently perturbed authority.

The denial of jury trial in the McLibel case seems to have been made on the basis that the scientific issues at stake were the most important, bearing in mind the plaintiff's business, and that they were too complex for a jury to comprehend. It has been a constant refrain that members of the public are not competent to make judgments of a specialist nature. This is demeaning. Moreover, why should the plaintiff's business interest take precedence over the welfare of the public? It would appear that public health and safety in Britain's abattoirs has been seriously jeopardised by working practices and by the Government's desire to minimise, marginalise or deflect public anxiety through either suppressing or toning down information.

Freedom of expression is crucial to the very existence of our democracy. This trial and this book squarely raise for our consideration whether we have now reached a stage in which it is impossible to engage in public debate about corporate activity without the risk of having to defend a five-year legal action.

It is compelling reading to recognise where real power lies and it is a testament to both their courage and tenacity that the two defendants were not seduced by attempts, once the trial was under way, to come to a settlement which might not incur any economic penalty but which would leave other critics unprotected in future. This has been a dramatically unselfish battle by David against Goliath.

Michael Mansfield QC is currently working on the Bridgewater Four appeal. The book is available at a special discount price of £8.90 from Books @ The Guardian Weekly

Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

Wagner, by Michael Tanner (Flamingo, £6.99)

TANNER'S bind is that he both loves Wagner's art and yet is not, like so many of Wagner's adorers, a bore or a neo-fascist ("they then sat through the music-dramas in what seems to have been a coma induced by treating them as ritual, and emerged more complacent than they went in"); his dismissal of the relevance of Wagner's anti-Semitism to the work is perhaps a little airy, or curt. Yet such a dismissal is a lot better coming from Tanner than from some leathery old Nazi with a season-ticket to Bayreuth.

There is, for a start, his sly sympathy for anti-Wagnerians, or at least his ability to understand the roots of their objections ("uniquely annoying"), his crisp language, the wistful tone of a "decisive rebuttal of the charge is not possible" — in an ideal world, he seems to be on the verge of saying, it would be; and the generous and forceful declaration of the aims of criticism. But this last is disingenuous: the whole aim of his book is to knock over objections to Wagner like so many tin ducks at a funfair. Any uneasiness withers in the face of Tanner's wit, sympathy and intelligence.

Dracula, by Bram Stoker, ed Nina Auerbach and David J Skal (Norton, £6.95)

A CENTURY old now, and so traduced by the innumerable versions of the story (even Coppola's wasn't as faithful as he made out) that the original novel still has the power to give us the willies — and the odd erotic frisson. The essays at the end grind their dreary little axes, as you'd expect (titles like "Gender and Inversion in Dracula", "The Homoerotic History of Dracula", "Suddenly Sexual Women in Dracula"), but the notes are actually useful, even revealing Stoker's sloppy editing. Suspiciously good value.

Red China Blues, by Jan Wong (Bantam, £6.99)

WONG, an irritating bubble-head who decided to become a Maoist in the early seventies, left her native Canada to become a gung-ho supporter of the Cultural Revolution in Beijing, mucking in at Big Joy Farm, demanding to be treated like an ordinary worker, and denouncing classmates who asked her for help to get to the West. Eventually, slowly, she woke up, stopped going misty-eyed at slogans ("Enthusiastically develop a massive criticism in academic fields!"), and produced this memoir — which, for all its annoying sparkiness, is pretty much the best way of finding out what life in China was, and is, really like.

Cambridge drop-out drops back in

John Sutherland

Knights of the Cross
by Piers Paul Read
Weidenfeld 311pp £16.99

THE SLAM-BANG action of Piers Paul Read's last thriller, the much acclaimed A Patriot In Berlin, was given thematic depth by Read's fascination with the clash of political and Catholic ideology — sharpened by Vatican II and the revival of Christianity in Russia.

The acclaim has induced Read to rattle off a successor in the same vein. Can he pull it off again? The answer is yes; Knights Of The Cross is as professionally efficient a piece of writing as A Patriot In Berlin, as thoughtful and almost as suspenseful. But, for reasons which are beyond any novelist's control, this thriller won't, one fears, hit the mark as effectively as its predecessor.

Knights Of The Cross takes the form of a journal started by a 35-year-old man at the instruction of his psychoanalyst. It will help him to know himself. There is not much to know; Michael Latham is washed up. He works well below his intellectual abilities as a monitor, no prospects. Michael has not even had a woman for a year as the novel opens. He is about to break his abstinence with a slightly naff colleague, whose matted pubic hair ("the tarantula") he finds only slightly more off-putting than the tacky reproductions of Van Gogh's sunflowers on her bedroom wall.

It was not always so. The low-flying Michael was once part of a triumvirate of young Cambridge stars. His two coevals have gone on to great things. Gordon Taylor is editor of the Sunday Gazette (a thinly veiled Sunday Times). Even higher-flying is George Harding, who has gone into politics and recently been appointed an absurdly young junior defence minister. George has cannily attached himself to the Eurosceptic faction in the Conservative party.

The plot moves on outward and inward tracks. The inward line involves Michael's relationship with his father — a high-Anglican priest, troubled by female ordination and bearded homosexuals in the church, but too "meek" to go over to Rome. Like his son, he has dropped out rather than struggle. The action narrative is convoluted and deeply paranoid. George's body is found floating naked in the Saar river in Luxemburg. Weals, welts and bites on his body indicate pre-mortem sexual aberrancy (hints of the Stephen Milligan episode). Is it a set-up? George has been investigating the mysterious discovery of an arms cache in Germany. He may have got too near the truth.

Taylor plucks the hero from his retirement, giving him an investigative assignment for the "Gazette". He is to masquerade as a Russian Orthodox priest and insinuate himself into a freemasonry of aristocrat German Catholics, the Knights of the Cross. This sinister Verbindung is suspected of having assassinated Harding, as part of a long-term conspiracy to set up a fourth Reich. In Germany, Michael finds the sexual stimulus so lacking at Caversham, in the virginal form of Monika von Tillich. He also discovers complex treachery and a wholly unanticipated explanation as to how Harding's whip-scarred and love-bitten corpse came to be dumped in the river. And he finds the adventure much more therapeutic than psychoanalysis. And the world is saved.

What Read has done in these last two novels is to explore the possibilities of Graham Greene's "entertainments" — the serious Catholic novelist's exercises in an unserious literary genre. And he has done it exceptionally well.

ILLUSTRATION: DAVID LEVINE

Agony uncle

John Sturrock

How Proust Can Change Your Life
by Alain de Botton
Picador 215pp £12.99

THE MONTAGE on the jacket of this slim volume is ominous: why should the subfusc Marcel Proust pictured there have a lurid bird clawing at his shoulder? Is it perhaps a parrot, echoing the unfortunate claim in the blurb that How Proust Can Change Your Life will do for this French author what Flaubert's Parrot so beautifully did for an earlier one? Or is it a goldfinch, the nickname which Proust gave to a contemporary hack writer whom he thought wrote pretentiously?

Whatever sort of bird it is, its presence on the jacket suggests that the feathers of nesting Proustians such as myself are sure to be ruffled by what lies within. But hardly: the coltish Alain de Botton is so obviously out to charm that the last thing on his bright young mind is the ruffling of feathers.

How Proust Can Change Your Life is a chatty small book in which his own worldly wisdom is displayed in easy association with that of the most alarmingly worldly novelist who ever lived, and in which Proust's huge and extraordinary novel is brought faux-naively within general reach as "a practical, universally applicable story about how to stop wasting, and begin appreciating one's life".

What this amounts to in practice is a succession of "How To" chapters: "How to Love Life Today", "How to Suffer Successfully", and so on, gathered partly from what Proust has to say or show in In Search Of Lost Time, partly from scraps of the novelist's biography and partly from what de Botton coyly refers to as his own "romantic antics". The idea is to demonstrate how much more aware and hence better people we would be were we to read Proust with this same view to self-improvement.

Reading In Search Of Lost Time is a wonderful experience, of attending as closely as you can over many hundreds of pages to the confidences of the most refined and capacious intelligence ever to be met with. A wonderful experience but not, for sure, one that is likely to do you the sort of good de Botton envisages. For Proust's novel is not a nice book, nor was he exactly a nice man. Both novel and novelist are more profoundly troubling and ambiguous sources of human understanding than you would guess from skimming across the surface of them in the undemanding company of Alain de Botton.

Indeed, if Proust were ever going to change the lives of those who read him, it could only be in the direction of an incurable misanthropy, so cruelly exact is he when it comes to providing the secret, malevolent reasons that even — or especially — the most civilised people harbour when acting as they do. This of course is the familiar stuff of comedy, and Proust is frequently a comic writer; but he is just as frequently viperish in laying bare the polluted springs of human relations, and so pessimistic as to show the cheery de Botton up for a trifler.

De Botton has chosen to hush this dark side of Proust up. Where, for example, is the chapter that there should have been here on "How to turn jealousy to advantage", given the huge part, at once destructive and inspirational, which that emotion is made to play in the novel? And where the chapter on "How to get to know gay men", since Proust is, among so many other things, the completest (and most entertaining) of guides to the social psychology of homosexuality?

The one chapter in How Proust Can Change Your Life in which de Botton has put himself out is the one that deals with the question of friendship, and with the remarkable coexistence within Proust of the caustic and unforgiving moralist and the inveterate fawner on titled women. Here de Botton has it right: the great novel is the ample space within which he planned and executed his revenge, not simply on the mindless blue-bloods and others whom he had spent so much effort courting in his wastrel days, but on himself as their flatterer, working compulsively up to the hour of his death to reveal in all its splendour the incomparable, and unsociable, intelligence that he had had to keep well hidden as he stood saying nothing very much to no one who really mattered in innumerable drawing-rooms.

And de Botton may be right also in taking Proust at his word when he said that he thought less well of himself than his butler thought of himself, and interpreting the novelist's excessive flattery of others as sincere evidence of an excessive desire to secure their affection. These are the few pages of de Botton's book where a three-dimensional Proust comes into view. Would that he had been present throughout.

Misconstrued linguist and radical scourge

Anthony Smith

Noam Chomsky: A Life of Dissent
by Robert F Barksy
MIT Press 237pp £17.95

NOAM CHOMSKY may turn out to have been been one of the most influential intellectuals in the world in this century (Robert Barsky thinks more than maybe) but he has simultaneously managed to locate himself among the most widely reviled of public intellectuals.

Barsky's book shows how this has come about: Chomsky was born into the socialist-Zionist movement of America but for decades has argued for a dual national state in the land of Palestine, a point of view guaranteed to rile most Israelis, although it was once the orthodoxy of certain groups of Zionist pioneers. He has also championed the cause of the East Timorese, denouncing not merely the Indonesians but also the Australians, who allegedly aid and abet them.

He has championed free speech and has been pilloried for defending the speech-rights of an infamous French Holocaust-denier. He has attacked Israel's behaviour towards the Palestinians and been denounced as an anti-Semite. He has tangled with the PLO and been labelled an Arab-hater. He is frequently attacked by ultra-radicals who discover that he is supporting ultra-ultra-radicals: he is drawn to the "riff-raff" of activism — "The kind of people," he is quoted as saying, "I like and take seriously," viz, the least fashionable kinds of anarchist and libertarian socialist. Indeed, he seems to scour the world, hoovering up invitations to address them.

Chomsky's destiny, in his political life, has been to act as the all-purpose radical scourge, never relenting, never measuring out his wrath, never prioritising his targets. He has been among the most prolific and wide-ranging pamphleteers of the century, and has made links with the pioneers of protest in a string of disputes and strained situations girdling the earth.

Barsky has researched Chomsky's early years extremely effectively. He has charted his course through the Zionist sectarian left in Philadelphia, among whom he grew up, under the stimulating impact of his brilliant Hebrew-teacher parents.

THE TWO branches of the Chomsky life project — discoveries in linguistics and trenchant radicalism — are both traceable to the same originating milieu: a father who was a grammarian theorist of Hebrew and a Depression-era neighbourhood populated by Irish and German Catholics who were, to a great extent, anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi.

His extended family was poor, but intellectually lively, including some who were Marxists and some who were autodidact union activists. They seem to have taken his precocity calmly. Soon after his 10th birthday, Chomsky wrote a school editorial on the fall of Barcelona and the crushing of the anarcho-syndicalist movement of Spain. In his teens, he gravitated towards anarchism.

A large proportion of this short book concentrates on Chomsky's preoccupations and writings prior to the age of 20, but it is not wasted space since so many of Chomsky's later catalogue of themes and causes can be seen in clear gestation during those pre-graduation years. One can see how the mainspring was tightened that was, in his later years, to yield, as it unwound, more than 70 books and a thousand articles — learnedly addressing an endless proliferation of themes.

Chomsky's research brought him by stages to the view that the principles of phrase structure and other sub-systems of universal grammar allow us "to see into the hidden nature of his mind ... for the first time in history". He came to feel that his discoveries were in a way analogous to the unravelling in science of the operations of waves and particles, of DNA and the fundamental forces of nature. He discovered in grammar the key to the operations of the mind and the foundation of culture.

This book is poised between biography and autobiography, the acolytic offering of a Canadian admirer to America's archimagus of dissent. Several years ago, the same author made a film about Chomsky (which the subject has refused to see) and quotes a great deal from transcripted conversations and interviews conducted during the present decade. If you are expecting a thoroughgoing personal biography of this preternaturally polymathic guru and pan-radical protester, you will find here only the preliminary material for such a project. We are offered a respectable hagiography, conscientiously composed, providing enough matter for the sceptical reader to form, if he wishes, a less than favourable view of the subject.

Children of the moon

Katy Emck

Ten Men
by Elisa Segrave
Faber 220pp £10.99

ELISA SEGRAVE'S new book is called Ten Men but it isn't really about men and there are more than 10 of them anyway. It is about growing up in the hippie zeitgeist, enjoying it, surviving it. Its ragged, rambling shape is the surest sign of its truth to reality. Just as she did in her acclaimed Diary Of A Breast, Segrave has given us stories culled directly from her own life. She has realised them so sharply that they have more meaning than most fiction, and stand for more lives than just her own.

Ten Men begins in the fifties with Segrave's father — an outspoken naval officer with a robustly lavatorial and sex-obsessed sense of humour — and ends 20 years later with boyfriend Harry, a motorbike-riding journalist who resembles the father. The boyfriends that precede Harry are moon children; drop-outs, radicals, hippies and students on quests.

They are the fruit of Segrave's enviably footloose youth, spent living off family money and on the bohemian fringes in America, London and Europe. We are left to make our own decisions about whether the move away from poetic types and towards the industrious Harry is a good one, but somehow Segrave manages to make it clear that it is.

Segrave captures the illusions and sweet irresponsibilities of late-sixties counter-culture, its drifting prolongation of youth, its naive sense of its own superiority and its tragic dimension. As a jobless aspiring writer, she is sometimes hopelessly gullible and passive, at other times critical and disappointed.

Segrave can make the most inconsequential observations radiate meaning, but is still a sparing writer, never overtly condemning or praising what she describes so well. She uses images rarely, but when she does they are unusually vivid. Thus the colour of a hippie's feet is like "a baboon's bottom" and the corners of a rented room lean "inwards, like the corners of a damp cardboard box".

Her account of trailing round late-sixties America as "assistant collector of underground newspapers" for a pseudish boyfriend is hilarious. Segrave has a highly developed sense of the absurd.

The impression of authenticity is overwhelming. The combination of raggedness and vivid scene-painting is part of the charm and originality of Segrave's writing. At some point in the course of Ten Men, reality-effect — and a seemingly unending stream of hopeless boyfriends — succeeds at the expense of story. But this is immaterial in view of the fact that Ten Men's parts stand as wholes on their own.

Birds from heaven and hell

Mark Cocker

I FELT extremely uncomfortable. I had arrived at a front gate in the small southern Arizonan town of Patagonia and although a large notice announced "Birders Welcome", you don't normally invade someone's private garden without asking. Even more bizarre was the fact that when I went round to the back lawn I found garden chairs shaded by an awning, all assembled for the convenience of visitors like myself. Suppressing the sense of embarrassment, I eventually sat down, erected my tripod, arranged my camera, lenses and telescope, then trained my binoculars on the back window.

This was clearly a very strange household. Or, rather, I should say that it was a very special household. For the owners, Wally and Marion Paton, allow complete strangers to enter their garden and share an experience they've enjoyed since they moved here a quarter of a century ago. Throughout that period they have hung dispensers filled with a sugar solution by their back window to attract hummingbirds. So generous and reliable are these food supplies that the Patons' garden has become one of the best places in the area to see these remarkable creatures. Seven years ago, aware of the public's growing interest in their garden, the Patons decided to invite the public in, and since then thousands of people visit annually.

Within minutes of arrival I realised why they did. Hummingbirds must rank as some of the most beautiful creatures not just amongst the world's birds but amongst all life forms. A species like Anna's Hummingbird, which was on display at the Patons' sugar dispensers, typifies many of the unique qualities of the entire family.

Across the whole of its upperparts it was a striking iridescent green. However, the male also had a brilliant facial shield — an area of metallic colour across his face and breast that spreads on the neck into a fan of elongated feathers.

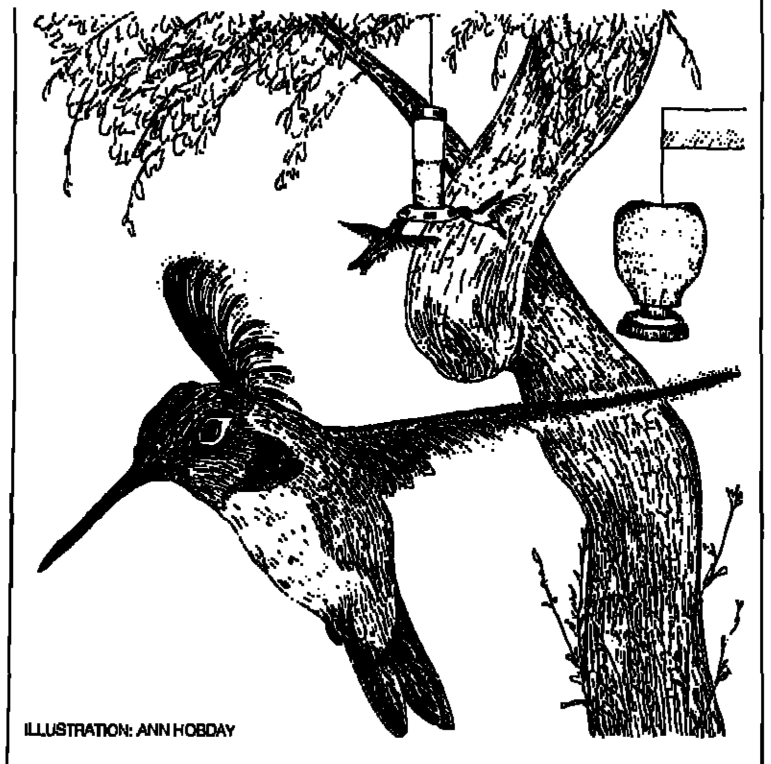


ILLUSTRATION: ANN HOBDAY

The colour on the shield is physical rather than pigmental. If one examined the feathers under a microscope their tips would show a transparent layer filled with minute air bubbles. Beneath lies a layer of black and if sunlight strikes the plate at certain angles it can all appear entirely dark. But with a turn of the head the bird was transformed as if suddenly illuminated by a tiny internal blaze, the black igniting into an improbably dazzling magenta.

Everything else about hummingbirds seems equally extraordinary. When hovering their wings beat at 60 times a second, and in some courtship flights this may rise to 200. The heart rate is equally unbelievable — soaring to 1,200 beats per minute. To keep pace with this energy expenditure they must feed constantly, a metabolism which, if reproduced in an adult man, would involve the daily consumption of 155,000 calories.

It is the sheer intensity with which "hummers" seem to live that has captivated human observers since pre-Columbian times. Many Native Americans have myths in which hummingbirds are represented as bringers of medicine, or light or even life itself. For tribes like the Aztecs they served as an image for one of their most potent deities, Huitzilopochtli. Some of this ancient reverence for hummers has undoubtedly been revived.

Intrigued by their own passion for the birds, I asked the Patons which were their own favourites. Wally, with a nice philosophical touch, chose the commonest species, the Broad-billed. Marion, a religious, church-going woman, disagreed. Her favourite was both an exquisitely beautiful gem and a real rarity, whose name she announced with a look of pure ironic delight: Lucifer's Hummingbird.

Bridge Zia Mahmood

HAVE you ever been overjoyed to go down in a grand slam? So mysterious is the game of bridge that even this catastrophe can, on occasion, work to your advantage. Sportswriters use the phrase "a team of destiny" to describe a team who appear fated to win a knock-out competition simply because of the miraculous way in which they continue to survive. If you'd been in Dallas last month, and you were a believer in destiny, you would have had no trouble picking the winners of the prestigious Vanderbilt trophy as soon as the quarter-finals were over.

Imagine for a moment that you are Paul Soloway. Don't worry — I'm not asking you to contemplate anything terrible; quite the reverse, in fact. Soloway is the highest-ranked player in the US, he has won many American and World Championships, and unlike a number of the world's great players, he is one of the most pleasant people you could meet. His partner, Bobby Goldman, is a leading campaigner for ethical standards in bridge, as well as being a player of world-championship class.

With all this going for you, it is a painful surprise to find yourself 8 IMPs behind your opponents in the Vanderbilt quarter-final with a single deal to play. This is your last chance — will you take it? North-South vulnerable, dealer South:

North
♠ A K J 5 4
♥ Q 10 9 8 3 2
♦ 3 2
♣ None

West
♠ 10 9 3
♥ 6
♦ J 10 7 6
♣ Q J 10 8 6

East
♠ Q 8 6
♥ 5
♦ K Q 5
♣ A K 9 7 4 3

South
♠ 7 2
♥ A K J 7 4
♦ A 9 8 4
♣ 5 2

This is a very difficult deal, since after South opens the bidding with 1♥, North will have to exercise superhuman restraint to stop short of a grand slam. Even the great Soloway-Goldman partnership could not manage it — they found their way to seven hearts, which required a 3-3 spade break with the queen in the West hand in order to set up discards for declarer's losing diamonds.

The 3-3 break materialised, but the queen was with East, and the grand slam failed.

Soloway and Goldman were convinced that, for them, the Vanderbilt was over. They needed to gain 9 IMPs or more on this last deal, and how could they possibly do that after going one down in seven hearts? With downcast heads, they prepared to apologise to Bernie Schwartz and Mark Lair, their teammates.

This was the bidding at the other table:

South	West Schwartz	North Lair	East
1♥	Pass	4♣(1)	5♠
5♦(2)	6♣	7♥	Dble!
Pass	Pass	Pass	

1 Heart support with a singleton or void in clubs.
2 The ace or a void in diamonds.

North-South fared no better than Soloway-Goldman when it came to avoiding the doomed seven hearts — but then destiny took a hand. A sixth sense prompted Lair to double the final contract, and a seventh or even an eighth sense persuaded Schwartz to lead a diamond!

Declarer won with the ace, drew trumps in one round and led a spade to the jack, playing for his contract. Lair won with the queen and cashed the king of diamonds, beating the doubled vulnerable contract by two tricks for a 500 penalty and a gain of precisely 9 IMPs!

Of course, had the grand slam been making, Soloway's team would have lost a big swing, so he and Goldman were delighted that it had failed. Who won the Vanderbilt? Need you ask? ©

Quick crossword no. 364

Across

1 Slight — incline (4)
3 Perplex — with a mild expletive? (8)
8 Play football — or punt! (4)
9 Honest — direct (8)
11 Insipid (5-5)
14 Deep-seated (6)
15 Nearly (6)
17 Bouncing canvas (10)
20 Prompt (8)
21 Band — call (4)
22 Confusion (8)
23 Network (4)

Down

1 Tepid (8)
2 Forefather (8)
4 Bandit (6)
5 Sudden deluge (5,5)
6 Impel (4)
7 Time — for fruit? (4)
10 Keyboard machine (10)
12 Murder (8)
13 Power (8)
16 African antelope (6)
18 Copied (4)
19 Responsibility (4)

Last week's solution

■	B	L	A	C	K	C	O	U	N	T	R	Y
R	■	U	■	H	■	O	■	N	■	W	■	A
H	I	N	G	E	■	R	U	C	T	I	O	N
O	■	A	■	F	■	R	■	T	■	S	■	K
D	U	T	Y	■	B	A	G	U	E	T	T	E
O	■	I	■	M	■	L	■	O	■	■	■	E
D	O	C	T	O	R	■	N	U	R	S	E	D
E	■	■	■	D	■	P	■	S	■	E	■	O
N	O	B	L	E	M	A	N	■	E	C	H	O
D	■	E	■	R	■	T	■	S	■	T	■	D
R	E	L	E	A	S	E	■	T	R	I	A	L
O	■	O	■	T	■	N	■	E	■	O	■	E
N	E	W	T	E	S	T	A	M	E	N	T	■

Chess Leonard Barden

***FOLLOWING* his impressive victory at Linares in March, Garry Kasparov told an interviewer that the market value of his world title unity match with Anatoly Karpov had dropped to $2 million from $3 million, due to the combined effect of his own clear superiority over all rivals and of Karpov's last place in the previous élite tournament at Las Palmas.**

Kasparov added that he believed that his rival would again do badly in the next event at Seville, whereupon his interviewer jokingly suggested that Kasparov should offer himself as Karpov's trainer for Seville, to prevent his unity match investment dropping further.

Kasparov laughed it off, but the opening rounds at Seville last month suggested that his forecast was spot on. After two nondescript draws, Karpov was crushed by Vladimir Kramnik, the 21-year-old leader of the young generation, in a game where Kramnik's virtuoso use of his bishop pair recalled Kasparov's own win over Karpov at Gran Canaria.

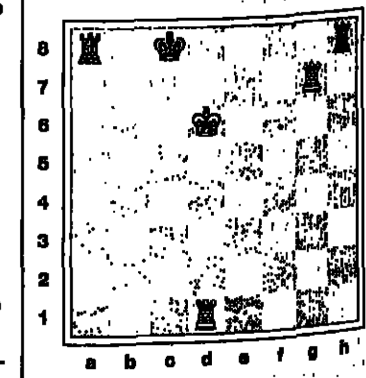
Kramnik-Karpov

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 A fashionable system, but for how long? White's reply acquires the two bishops and a space advantage.

4 Qc2 0-0 5 a3 Bxc3 6 Qxc3 b6 7 b4 Bb7 8 Bb2 d6 9 e3 Nbd7 10 d4 Ne4 11 Qb3 a5 12 Be2 axb4 13 axb4 Rxa1+ 14 Bxa1 Ndf6?! f5 is the natural plan, when the latent counterpunch against the WK slows down White's Q-side play. Black's plan leaves an isolated b6 pawn. **15 0-0 Qd7 16 b5 Ra8 17 Bb2 c6 18 bxc6 Qxc6 19 Rc1 Nd7 20 Ne1 Qa4?** This endgame turns out badly. Black's best chance is a passive middle game; when the weak b6 and d6 pawns are not easy to attack.

21 Qxa4 Rxa4 22 f3 Nef6 23 Bd1 Ra2 24 Nd3 Kf8 25 Bb3 Ra8 26 e4 Nb8? Better Ke7. **27 c5!** Kramnik launches an accurate final sequence, in which all White's pieces spring into action while Karpov's grovel on the back rows. **bxc5 28 dxc5 dxc5 29 Nxc5 Bc8 30 e5 Ne8** A sorry picture; The entire Karpovian army prepares to retreat to the chessbox. **31 Ba4 Nc7 32 Ba3 Kg8 33 Ne4! Rxa4** If Nba6 34 Nd6 is an original way to trap a bishop. **34 Rxc7 Ba6 35 Nc5! Resigns** Black loses a piece.

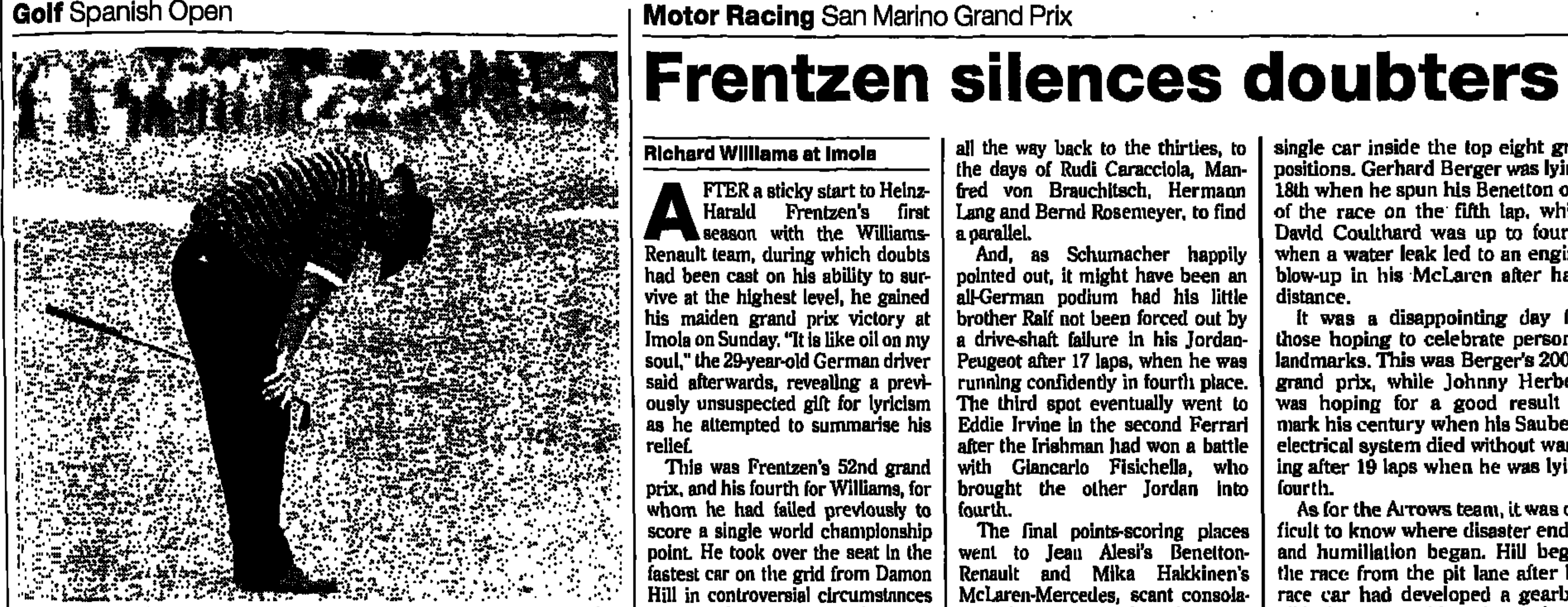
No 2470



White to play; how can he win? This endgame, by Henri Rinck (1921), should be trivial, but defeats many solvers.

No 2469: (b). 1 Rxd6! Nxd6 2 Kc1! draws. If Black tries to mate, White's a5 pawn advances. (c) 1 Rd7? Nc3+ 2 Ke1 Bg3+ 3 Kf1 Nxd5 4 Rxd5 c3 wins. (d) Lilienthal played (a) 1 Bxc4? Nc3+ 2 Ke1 (2 Kc1 Ba3 mate) Bg3+ 3 Kf1 Rf2+ 4 Kg1 Ne4 with the decisive Bh2+ and Ng3 mate.

Golf Spanish Open



Bowing to the inevitable. . . Greg Norman with his head down after losing in the sudden-death shoot-out PHOTOGRAPH: STEPHEN MUNDAY

Norman again loses the battle of nerves

Michael Britten in Madrid

MARK JAMES took full advantage of Greg Norman's capacity to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory to capture the Spanish Open title for the second time here on Sunday.

James triumphed at the third extra hole at La Moraleja II after Norman had sunk a 20ft birdie putt on the 18th green of the final round to tie on 277, 11 under par, the Englishman having shot 69 and the Australian, who had led after 54 holes, a 70.

Two further visits to the 383-yard dogleg 18th failed to separate them, but when they returned to the short 17th, a par three by James was sufficient to secure a victory worth almost £85,000, as Norman missed the target, chipped weakly, and failed with his putter from 12 feet.

This was James's 23rd tournament victory in a 22-year career, but his first for two years. It was richly deserved on an afternoon of high drama which left Norman again nursing his wounds after a second play-off setback in Europe within eight weeks.

Last month he also lost the world No 1 spot, although by the time he left here he had regained the leading position, and on arriving in the Spanish capital talked of the 52 weeks of "water torture" he had endured after losing to Nick Faldo in the 1996 US Masters.

After shooting 69, 70, 68 in the first three rounds, Norman insisted that his nerve was still strong, but the truth is that it is no longer pressure-proof, and certainly James was mentally his master in their sudden-death shoot-out.

It had been virtual matchplay after the Englishman grabbed his third birdie four at the 11th to edge one ahead. Norman responded by holing from off the green at the same hole for an eagle three to level, but failed to match another birdie four from James at the 16th.

When Norman missed the green at the 17th the issue looked settled, but James three-putted the last and Norman grabbed the lifeline presented with a birdie three.

"I just kept hitting the shots and hoped he would make mess up, and he did," said James. "This win means a huge amount to me. It confirms I still have the ability to play; it will probably make me exempt for the Open, and it gives me an outside chance of another Ryder Cup."

The Swede Jarmo Sandelin (66) and Argentina's Eduardo Romero (69) shared third place on 278, while José Maria Olazábal continued his impressive comeback with a 67 for joint 11th. The Spaniard is 59 under par for the 24 rounds he has played since his return following an 18-month absence with foot problems.

Football results

Nationwide League First Division Barnsley 2 Bradford 0; Birminghm 2 Oxford 0; Port Vale 1 Wolves 2; QPR. 2 Tranmere 0; Reading 2 Oldham 0; Southend 1 Huddersfld 2; Swindon 0 Crystal Pal 2; W.B.A. 2 Grimsby 0. **Leading positions:** 1, Bolton (played 45-points 97); 2, Barnsley (45-80); 3, Wolves (45-76).

Nationwide League Second Division Blackpool 3 Bristol R 2; Bournemth 2 Wrexham 1; Bristol City 3 Plymouth 1; Crewe 1 Chesterfld 2; Millwall 0 Gillingham 2; Notts Co 1 Burnley 1; Peterboro 0 Luton 1; Rotherham 0 York 2; Shrewsbry 0 Preston 2; Stockport 2 Wycombe 1; Walsall 1 Brentford 0; Watford 0 Bury 0. Chesterfield 0 Stockport 1 (Mon). **Leading positions:** 1, Bury (45-81); 2, Stockport (45-81); 3, Luton (45-77).

Nationwide League Third Division Brighton 1 Doncaster 0; Cardiff 2 Carlisle 0; Colchester 0 Northmptn 0; Exeter 1 Chester 5; Fulham 2 Hull 0; Hartlepool 4 Barnet 0; Leyton O 2 Hereford 1; Mansfield 2 Darlington 1; Rochdale 3 Cambridge 0; Scarboro 0 Lincoln 2; Sc'thorpe 1 Swansea 0; Torquay 0 Wigan 3. **Leading positions:** 1, Wigan (46-84); 2, Fulham (46-84); 3, Carlisle (44-78).

Scottish League First Division Airdrie 1 Stirling A 2; Clydebank 0 Morton 1; Dundee 1 Partick 1; Falkirk 1 St Johnstn 4; St Mirren 1 East Fife 0. **Leading positions:** 1, St Johnstn (34-74); 2, Airdrie (34-59); 3, St Mirren (34-55).

Scottish League Second Division Berwick 0 Clyde 2; Brechin 1 Stenhsmr 1; Hamilton 1 Ayr 1; Queen Sth 1 Livingston 2; Stranraer 1 Dumbarton 0. **Leading positions:** 1, Ayr (34-71); 2, Hamilton (34-70); 3, Livingston (34-60).

Scottish League Third Division Alloa 1 Montrose 0; Cowdnbth 2 Inverness 1; E.Stirling 1 Queens Pk 0; Forfar 3 Albion 1; Ross Co 1 Arbroath 0. **Leading positions:** 1, Inverness CT (34-76); Forfar (34-61); Ross Co (34-61).

Motor Racing San Marino Grand Prix

Frentzen silences doubters

Richard Williams at Imola

AFTER a sticky start to Heinz-Harald Frentzen's first season with the Williams-Renault team, during which doubts had been cast on his ability to survive at the highest level, he gained his maiden grand prix victory at Imola on Sunday. "It is like oil on my soul," the 29-year-old German driver said afterwards, revealing a previously unsuspected gift for lyricism as he attempted to summarise his relief.

This was Frentzen's 52nd grand prix, and his fourth for Williams, for whom he had failed previously to score a single world championship point. He took over the seat in the fastest car on the grid from Damon Hill in controversial circumstances at the end of last season, but early results seemed to support widely expressed fears that he lacked the mental strength necessary to flourish at the front of the field.

His coolness under pressure in the later stages of the race, when he resisted a stern challenge from Michael Schumacher's Ferrari, formed a persuasive response.

Frentzen's victory also served to open up the championship race. His team-mate Jacques Villeneuve, the series leader after wins in Brazil and Argentina, no longer looks quite such a certainty for the title, although he led the first third of the race, before dropping back and succumbing to a gear-change problem.

Second place for Michael Schumacher, 1.2sec behind Frentzen, made this the first one-two finish for German drivers since the Formula One world championship began in 1950. Historians will have to search all the way back to the thirties, to the days of Rudi Caracciola, Manfred von Brauchitsch, Hermann Lang and Bernd Rosemeyer, to find a parallel.

And, as Schumacher happily pointed out, it might have been an all-German podium had his little brother Ralf not been forced out by a drive-shaft failure in his Jordan-Peugeot after 17 laps, when he was running confidently in fourth place. The third spot eventually went to Eddie Irvine in the second Ferrari after the Irishman had won a battle with Giancarlo Fisichella, who brought the other Jordan into fourth.

The final points-scoring places went to Jean Alesi's Benetton-Renault and Mika Hakkinen's McLaren-Mercedes, scant consolation after a wretched weekend for their teams, which failed to qualify a single car inside the top eight grid positions. Gerhard Berger was lying 18th when he spun his Benetton out of the race on the fifth lap, while David Coulthard was up to fourth when a water leak led to an engine blow-up in his McLaren after half-distance.

Frentzen . . . enjoying his first Grand Prix victory

It was a disappointing day for those hoping to celebrate personal landmarks. This was Berger's 200th grand prix, while Johnny Herbert was hoping for a good result to mark his century when his Sauber's electrical system died without warning after 19 laps when he was lying fourth.

As for the Arrows team, it was difficult to know where disaster ended and humiliation began. Hill began the race from the pit lane after his race car had developed a gearbox oil leak on the grid, and was clearly in an angry mood when he made an ill-judged attempt to pass Shinji Nakano for 17th place at the Variante Bassa on the 11th lap, running into the Japanese driver's tail and sending them both into the sand.

The stewards later gave the world champion a suspended one-race ban, a penalty also given to his team-tate Pedro Diniz for not observing blue flags when a near-collision with Villeneuve took place early on.

"I was cheesed off," Hill said, before attempting to blame the innocent Nakano for getting in his way. "I don't feel I should be chugging around at the back of the field," he added. But no driver ever does. And desperate gestures, even in desperate circumstances, are not the answer to his particular problem.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

European dream ends for English clubs

THE lights went out on British football in Europe when the two remaining teams in this season's competitions, Manchester United and Liverpool, fell at the penultimate hurdle of their respective cup bids.

A goal in the seventh minute by Borussia Dortmund's 20-year-old Lars Ricken gave the German champions victory by a single goal and 2-0 on aggregate in the European Cup at Old Trafford. He fired a shot across Peter Schmeichel which the United goalkeeper was unable to stop.

It was a frustrating evening for the Reds, who squandered a series of scoring opportunities. Andy Cole hit the side netting twice, Gary Pallister headed wide from only a few yards while Eric Cantona and Ryan Giggs were also guilty of glaring misses at a crucial stage of the match.

In the other semi-final in Turin, holders Juventus overwhelmed Ajax 4-1 to win 6-2 on aggregate and set up a clash with Dortmund in the final in Munich on May 28.

Liverpool, playing Paris St-Germain in the semi-final, second leg of the European Cup Winners' Cup at Anfield, put up a titanic fight to overturn the three-goal deficit with which they had gone into the game. But, although goals were there, the glory evaded them, for they could manage only two. The Merseysiders got off to a bright start when Robbie Fowler put them ahead in the 12th minute. Mark Wright got the second with a towering header 11 minutes from time.

In the final frenetic search for the third elusive goal, even Liverpool keeper David James joined the fray but the ball would just not go into the net. Paris St-Germain will meet Barcelona in the final at Rotterdam on May 14.

THE Wembley dream of plucky Second Division Chesterfield ended when they were beaten by Middlesbrough 3-0 in a one-sided semi-final replay of the FA Cup at Hillsborough.

The Premiership side got off to an ideal start when Juninho's 12th minute pass found Mikkel Beck, who confidently slotted home. Fabrizio Ravanelli doubled the lead shortly after half-time when he rose above the defence to head home Juninho's superb freekick. Emerson completed the scoring in the final minute with a 20-yard piledriver. Middlesbrough will meet Chelsea in the final on May 17.

In Scotland, Jim McIntyre sent Kilmarnock into their first Scottish Cup final for 37 years with a late goal in the semi-final replay against Dundee United. In the other match, Celtic were surprisingly beaten 1-0 by First Division Falkirk who reached their first FA Cup final in 40 years, to be played on May 24.

GEORGE FOREMAN retained his WBU heavyweight title by outpointing America's latest Great White Hope, Lou Savarese, at Atlantic City in a punishing 12-round fight. Savarese, who was unbeaten in 33 fights but relatively unknown, matched the 48-year-old punching preacher from Texas, blow for blow.

In Britain, Bernard Paul won the vacant Commonwealth light-welterweight title by beating Zambia's Felix Bwalya. Meanwhile Colin McMillan, the former WBO featherweight champion, announced his retirement from the ring.

WILL CARLING, England's former, highly successful Rugby Union captain, is to retire from the international scene. Carling played in 72 matches for England, a record 59 of them as captain. "I tried to convince myself I could do it again next year, but over the last few weeks it became obvious I couldn't," he said. Carling confirmed that he will continue to play for his club, Harlequins.

A CROWD of fewer than 24,000 in Sydney saw Australia beat New Zealand 34-22 in the first Rugby League Test played between the two countries since Rupert Murdoch's breakaway Super League was first established.